Oslo youth between individualization and class

A study of orientations towards the future

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Summary

This dissertation investigates the future orientations of Oslo youth as they approach their twenties. It does so against the backdrop of theoretical debates over individualization, class, and youth. Theories of individualization highlight how a host of historical developments have expanded the scope of individual choice and reinforced the cultural ideals of individualism and self-realization. In parallel, the temporal window for navigating as an individual young person has been widened, as transitions into traditionally adult roles now tend to occur later than they did for previous generations. This is particularly so in the context of Oslo, where the average young person leaves the parental home at 20 and does not enter parenthood until after the age of 30.

Theories of individualization and an individualized youth stage have been met with critique from a class and inequality perspective, with the charge that they overemphasize individual agency, and overlook the persistent impact of class backgrounds on life chances. Even in Norway where educational policy has specifically aimed to counteract such effects, class background continues to influence grades and aspirations. Although there are still proponents on both flanks rejecting the opposing view, there has been a convergence towards middle ground solutions, with a proliferation of attempts at integrating individualization and class perspectives. However, hybrids take myriad forms, and often remain at the abstract level.

The dissertation aims for an empirically based integration of individualization and class perspectives. The overarching research questions that guide the three empirical articles are, how do Oslo youth in the transition away from high school navigate towards the future, and to what extent do future orientations differ for youth from dissimilar social backgrounds? These questions are investigated through statistical analyses of survey data collected when most respondents were 17 years old and in their second year of high school, and qualitative analyses of interview data collected when most participants were 19 years old and in their first post high school year. Where the survey data are well suited for identifying social patterns within the orientations of interest, the interview data provide a window into how participants make sense of their situation and make plans for the future.

While individualization is both an institutional/objective and a cultural/subjective phenomenon, the findings indicate a schism whereby socioeconomic differences are miniscule in the domain of cultural ideals, but substantial in the domain of concrete plans and life choices. At the subjective level, Oslo youth tend to embrace the cultural ideals of individualism and self-realization – irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds. They hope to find work that is intrinsically meaningful, and tend to be more motivated by self-realization than by the pursuit of wealth or prestige. They perceive the amount of options available to them as virtually limitless, and see hard work and determination as the most important factors for achieving their goals. At the same time however, the caveat must be added that their endorsement of individualist values does not prevent them from recognizing the relevance of unequally distributed family resources.
Socioeconomic background plays a bigger part in the formation of concrete plans for the future – in their movement through the education system, in their plans for international mobility, and to some extent, in their expectations for the timing of transitions into traditionally adult roles. Statistical differences within these plans and expectations are likely to materialize into different objective outcomes. The relationship between class and education is already visible in the allocation to different high school programs, as well as in high school grades and college aspirations. Moreover, expectations for the timing of adult markers depend in part on class background and educational trajectory. Finally, while a large share of Oslo youth are eager to get out and see the world, plans for international mobility are substantially less frequent among those from working class backgrounds.
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II: Intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation among US and Norwegian high school students

III: Within and outside the mainstream: Social class and emerging adulthood in a Norwegian context
1. Introduction

This dissertation examines the future orientations of Oslo youth towards the end of their teenage years – against the backdrop of theoretical debates over individualization, class, and youth. It is based on empirical analyses of survey and interview data collected when most participants were at the ages of 17 and 19, respectively. The timing coincides with an important crossroads in their lives, as they begin to leave the steady settings of the classroom and the family home behind. A series of role transitions usually take place during these years. Norwegian law sets the age of majority at 18. The model high school student graduates the year she turns 19, while the median age of leaving the parental home in Oslo is 20. At the same time, other role transitions remain quite far down the road for most – such as completing college, starting a professional career, and forming a family of one’s own. The average age of first birth for women in Oslo is 31. At the age of 17, only ten per cent of the survey respondents anticipate not going to college, while half the sample expect to stay in college for five years or more.

The contextual parameters are thus lined up for a wide temporal window for navigating as an individual, rather than as part of a family. In the language of modernity and youth scholars, the conditions can be said to promote a lengthy and individualized period of youth, or what Arnett (2000) has called emerging adulthood. The survey and interviews were carried out between 2009 and 2012, at a time when the oil-enhanced Norwegian economy proved resilient in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. In a global context, Norwegian youth continue to grow up under materially privileged circumstances, in an affluent country with extensive welfare state policies in place. At the same time, inequalities persist. Norway has not been exempt from general trends of rising economic inequality, although such trends have been more dramatic elsewhere (Atkinson & Morelli, 2014). As the capital and largest city, Oslo is marked by higher concentrations of both affluence and hardship than the rest of the country. Such concentrations have tended to overlap with the geographical east-west axis, making ‘the divided city’ a recurrent example of inequality in public debates. For instance, Oslo has the country’s highest rates both of academic aspirations and of relative child poverty.

This tension between affluence and welfare state provisions on the one hand and continuing or even rising inequality on the other, is illustrative of a theoretical debate that has been recurrent within sociology and youth research over the last two decades. Theories of individualization (e.g. Beck, 1992; Buchmann, 1989; Bauman, 2001) highlight how a host of large-scale societal shifts have conspired to expand the scope and magnitude of individual choice, and to undergird the cultural ideals of individualism and self-realization. The mainline of critique against both Beck and Arnett has come from a class and inequality perspective (e.g. Goldthorpe, 2002; Bynner, 2005), with the charge that these theories overemphasize agency to the detriment of social structures, and that they take the middle class experience as universal. Even within the context of the late modern individualized society, students of inequality have demonstrated a persistent impact of class backgrounds on life chances.

Influential youth scholars at the turn of the century presented the situation for youth in late modernity as paradoxical (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Wyn & White, 2000). How could the
persistent impact of class and inequality be understood – in a context where young people are increasingly free and indeed forced to individually navigate their way through an expanding menu of life choices and possible paths? The Oxford English Dictionary lists several definitions of a paradox – one in particular reads like a research program for youth research at the turn of the century, with class versus individualization as the apparent paradox: "An apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true" (OED Online, 2016). While scholars on either side of the debate over individualization and class have often rejected the opposing view and thus the premise of the paradox altogether, youth researchers have gravitated towards middle ground solutions in their investigations, analyses, and explanations (Woodman, 2009).

Theoretically and methodologically, the dissertation argues against claims of incommensurability. It engages with claims of incompatibility from both flanks of the debate over individualization and class. For Archer (2012), the importance of class through habitus is in decline in the twenty-first century, whereas reflexivity takes on a rising importance. For Atkinson (2010), claims of individualization and enhanced reflexivity are exaggerated and dubious to begin with, whereas class and habitus retain their importance as before. Presenting a mixed methods study, the dissertation necessarily also rejects a methodological incompatibility thesis. Although both debates are still ongoing, I will not be the first to reconcile either of the two oppositions. For instance, Howe (1988) rejected the claim of incompatibility between quantitative and qualitative logics, made by Guba & Lincoln (1982) and others. As methodological paradigm wars have cooled off to some extent, there have also been numerous theoretical contributions reconciling individualization and class perspectives (e.g. Savage, 2000; Adams, 2006; Elder-Vass, 2007). There is thus no shortage of available hybrids, on either the theoretical or the methodological level.

While claims of incommensurability need to be addressed, an equally vexing question is what form hybrids should actually take: how seemingly opposing perspectives are to be reconciled in a convincing and productive manner. In one sense, hybrids take almost as many forms as there are theoretical commentators and mixed method research projects. Discussions of individualization vs. class and reflexivity vs. habitus often become abstract and intricate, which may distract from the task of producing empirical knowledge relevant to the study of young people. A central ambition of the dissertation is thus to attempt to bridge these gaps: combining methods and combining theoretical perspectives in a pragmatic way, in order to better understand the future orientations of contemporary Oslo youth.

Future orientations are not the same as de facto destinations, and as such, they might be regarded as particularly elusive. Indeed, there is an element of truth to the idiom that life is what happens while one is busy making other plans – participants may well find themselves in different situations at age 25 or 30 than what they imagined at age 17 or 19. Even so, future orientations are interesting in their own right, and frequently subject to scholarly attention. Empirically, expectations for the future tend to be good predictors of outcomes in a statistical sense (e.g. Crockett & Beal, 2012). Future orientations can be understood as bridges between
past and future and between social environments and individual trajectories. They are likely subject to primary and secondary socialization influences and at the same time, they form the foundation for asserting oneself as an individual in ‘adult’ society. The choice of such a broad concept to guide the dissertation is deliberate, and intended to encompass the specific empirical interests of each article. Under the umbrella of future orientations, educational aspirations in particular have been studied extensively within a class and inequality perspective. A persistent finding has been that even net of how they fare in terms of grades, pupils from higher class backgrounds report higher academic aspirations (e.g. Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). However, the broader discussion of an individualized youth stage opens up additional spaces for empirical inquiry.

The overarching questions that follow from this introductory discussion are, how do Oslo youth in the transition away from high school navigate towards the future, and to what extent do future orientations differ for youth from dissimilar social backgrounds? These questions are investigated through three empirical articles, each focusing on particular articulations of the study participants’ future orientations:

Article 1: Individualized youth subjectivity and social background: Subjective understandings of advantage and disadvantage among Oslo youth. Published in *Journal of youth studies*, 2014 (6), 733-748.

Article 2: Intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation among US and Norwegian high school students. Published in *Young*, 2015 (4), 293-312.

Article 3: Within and outside the mainstream: Social class and emerging adulthood in a Norwegian context. Submitted for review to *Emerging adulthood*. 
2. Theoretical perspectives

Debates between individualization and class perspectives have been pivotal within youth research as well as in sociology generally, over the last two decades. While different theoretical positions have sometimes been diametrically opposed to one another in these debates, there have also been significant developments towards hybridization. This chapter both engages with the disagreements and with different routes towards reconciliation. The chapter begins by interrogating the notions of individualization and an individualized youth stage. It then moves on to present critiques of individualization that have been formulated based on a class perspective. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the merits and drawbacks of three different routes towards reconciliation.

2.1 An individualized youth stage

Although the concept of youth has a clear biological basis, it is at the same time a social construction, and is given different meanings under different circumstances. Despite its widespread appearance in everyday discourse, it should not be regarded as a fixed entity. It has of course always been the case that the individual lifespan is finite and that one is younger in its beginning stages than one is toward its end. Even so, the meanings of youth have undergone significant change over time. Historical accounts of the youth concept suggest that the youth stage as an intermediary stage between childhood and adulthood first appeared with the advent of industrial society (see Chisholm, et al., 2011). Moreover, the youth stage has been undergoing substantial change during the twentieth century as it has been extended, diversified, and individualized (Buchmann, 1989). The connotations of youth and adulthood have been changing, and the demarcating lines between them have been blurred (Côté, 2000, Ch.1). In part, such connotations have been decoupled from biological changes and concrete role transitions, and the concepts appear more fuzzy and plastic today than what one imagines was the case in earlier periods.

The classical sociological theories on the transformation from traditional to modern society already contained a strong element of individualization. According to Durkheim (1933), social change in the nineteenth century entailed a more specialized division of labor and a weakening of mechanic solidarity, leaving the individual with novel freedoms as well as worries. What distinguishes more recent accounts such as those of Beck (1992), Buchmann (1989), and Bauman (2001), is that individualization itself becomes as a primary object of attention and secondly, that the individualization process is claimed to have gone further since the early twentieth century. Theories of individualization highlight how a host of large-scale societal shifts have conspired to expand the scope and magnitude of individual choice, to heighten the uncertainty and risk that surrounds life choices, and to reinforce discourses of individualism and self-realization. "To put it in a nutshell, `individualization` consists of transforming human `identity` from a `given` into a `task` and charging the actors with the
responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) of their performance” (Bauman 2000, pp.31-2).

Different authors emphasize different historical causes of individualization, like for instance: the expansions of the education system, the flexibilization of the labor market, changing gender relations and the mutations of the family, marketization and changing consumption, globalization processes, and advances in communication technology (Beck, 1992; Buchmann, 1989; Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2001). Amidst the different suggested motors of individualization, the theme of differentiation at the structural, institutional level runs through the literature. It is safe to say that institutional complexity has only increased since Durkheim’s time. Parsons (1951), Luhmann (1977), and Habermas (1987) are among the theorists who have inherited and extended his focus on functional differentiation as a principal driver of social change. As the individual increasingly encounters many rather than few institutional contexts and sub-contexts, the imperative to piece together one’s own identity based on a selective combination of attachments, intensifies.

Beck (1992) differentiates between two types of institutions, where one is losing and the other is gaining significance in the process of individualization. The institutions that have traditionally stood closest to the individual, like the family, neighborhood, and social class with concomitant class cultures – Beck calls these ‘traditional support networks’ or ‘conscience collectives’ – are going through destabilization. The individual thus has to deal more directly with larger and more powerful institutions, without the aid of smaller collective entities acting as buffer. These institutions then, operating at the level of state and market (and increasingly; transnationally), are gaining power over individuals. At the same time, institutions are undergoing differentiation and specialization, leaving individuals with a wider array of choices, but with greater risk and uncertainty tied to each possible choice.

In addition to developments at the institutional level, theories of individualization emphasize change at the cultural level. Developments at the level of institutions are accompanied by a cultural shift towards greater emphasis on individual self-realization and self-determination. As such ideals become a dominant force in society, individuals increasingly come to regard themselves as architects of their own fortune, and on the flipside, responsible for their own misfortunes (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.25). As religion and collective entities have been subverted over time as stable providers of meaning and identity, individuals are no longer merely oriented towards fulfilling their duty or satisfying material needs, but may instead turn inward in a search for a personal authenticity (Taylor, 1991).

Moreover, the individualization literature revolves around the concept of reflexivity. In recent years, Archer (2003; 2007; 2012) has proposed a theory of reflexivity that in certain ways goes beyond Beck’s and Giddens’ use of the term. She criticizes the former two for offering too much of a dichotomous account where traditional societies are understood as virtually devoid of reflexivity. Accordingly, she insists that humans have always possessed reflexivity, and indeed that no individual or society could realistically function without it (2012, Ch. 1). Archer defines reflexivity as “(…) the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa”
The reflexive deliberations taking place in this internal conversation are what link structure and agency within her ontological framework, mediating the causal powers of structural and cultural properties, and guiding our navigation as we make our way through the world (2007, pp.10-15).

While reflexivity was always there, the imperative to exercise it intensifies as societal contexts become morphogenetic, rather than morphostatic, over time. That is, social structures and cultural systems of meaning are increasingly being reproduced as they were, and increasingly changing their shape. In Archer’s threefold history of structural and cultural contexts, pre-modern societies were characterized by contextual continuity. The advent of the modern age introduced contextual discontinuity, while more radical forms of contextual incongruity are beginning to take shape in the twenty-first century. This development enhances and demands more of individual reflexivity (Archer, 2012, Ch.1). By extension according to Archer, people can no longer rely on habit and routine action. Under conditions of contextual incongruity where variety produces ever more variety, embodied dispositions internalized during one’s upbringing are no longer effective roadmaps for individuals, as they make their way through a novel landscape. Thus, ‘socialization isn’t what it used to be’ (p.82), and Bourdieu’s framework and the concept of habitus, so central to the contemporary class perspective, are rapidly losing their significance and are admitted relevance only for the past (Ch.2).

The presumed socially stable post-war period is often used as the backdrop against which subsequent individualizing tendencies have taken place. As such, it is interesting to note that Beck, for instance, formulated his theory of individualization in the 1980s, now three decades ago – when the parents of the present study’s participants would typically be in their twenties. Writing in the same decade, Buchmann (1989) traced individualization processes in the US by comparing the diversified transition patterns of the high school class of 1980 with the more brief and linear transitions of the class of 1960. Within a modernization perspective, we did not merely witness a singular wave of individualization from the postwar period to the 1980s, but rather we are witnessing a ‘juggernaut’ (Giddens, 1990, Ch.5) that keeps rolling and is likely also accelerating (Rosa, 2010). Young people are often understood as the first recipients of social change, making the latest waves of individualization particularly evident among young people. The popular notion of ‘digital natives’ can serve as just one illustration of the pace of change, highlighting the current centrality of information systems and technologies that did not exist even when those in the parent generation were growing up. The advent of the internet alone represented a breakdown of barriers to possible sources of information and possible connections. In even more recent years, the arrival of social media platforms opens up new spaces where young people’s identities can be continuously performed and refashioned, again demanding some form of reflexivity.

Theories of individualization have been highly influential, if sometimes contentious, in the field of youth research. However, the most determined attempt at establishing a label and a paradigm for the contemporary youth stage has been developed without direct reference to theories of individualization or the phraseology of reflexivity. Rather than European theories
of late modernity, Arnett (2000; 2004) starts from American psychology and the inability of its categories to deal with postponed transitions to traditionally adult roles. Even so, Arnett’s proposal of emerging adulthood as a historically novel life stage has clear affinities with the notion of an individualized youth stage. The proposed central features of emerging adulthood – possibilities, self-focus, identity explorations, instability, and feeling in-between – can all be viewed as outcomes of the individualization of the youth stage. Structurally, young people are faced with more numerous possibilities and an extended period where exploration is possible and a degree of instability is expected, while culturally, they adopt the ideals of self-realization with a great deal of optimism, and hope to eventually have meaningful careers that ‘click with their identity’ (Arnett, 2004, Ch. 7).

2.2 Class critique

The mainline of critique against both emerging adulthood and individualization has come from a class and inequality perspective. Arnett’s critics question whether his account has validity across all sections of the youth population, and suggest his portrayal of emerging adulthood extrapolates and generalizes the experiences of middle class, college attending youth. Where Arnett emphasizes optimism, possibilities, and the individual freedom to explore them, his critics highlight how opportunities, resources and constraints tend to be unequally structured, leading to quite disparate ways of navigating the youth phase (Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Côté, 2014).

John Goldthorpe, a key figure in the sociology of class, has offered a similarly dismissive critique of Beck’s and Giddens’ assertions about individualization and globalization, characterizing them as little more than “intellectual bluff and bluster” (2002, p.22). Goldthorpe’s main charges are the alleged lack of a foundation in empirical research, and what he reads as an overemphasis on epochal change, to the detriment of societal features that retain stability over time. The Constant Flux, the title of Erikson and Golthorpe’s 1992 volume, refers to the high degree of stability in relative social mobility rates over time, in nine European countries as well as Japan and the US. Relative mobility rates are calculated by comparing the statistical chances of individuals from dissimilar class origins of reaching a given class destination. The onset of post-industrial society necessitated a net reduction in the number of manual occupations and an expansion of service class occupations, and by extension, upward social mobility was bound to occur more frequently than its opposite. Goldthorpe’s emphasis on relative rather than absolute mobility makes visible how life chances continue to be structured by class backgrounds, even throughout times of occupational restructuring at the macro level.

The EGP class schema assigns people to classes based on their occupations (Erikson, Goldthorpe & Portocarrero, 1979). Upper service class workers are able to secure favorable career contracts because of the specificity of their skills and the difficulty of monitoring their productivity. At the other end of the spectrum, unskilled workers tend to get precarious work anchored in labor contracts (Goldthorpe, 2000, Ch.10). Together with the categories specified
in between the two, they make up a schema that has been widely used as a class variable to examine associations with other variables of interest. The widespread and consistent use of the schema gives it currency as a standard way of operationalizing class. For young people yet to fill an occupation of course, class background only refers to parental occupation, and not one’s class of destination, which is yet unknown. However from an early age, both primary effects (grades) and secondary effects (aspirations net of grades) of class background are visible at successive educational junctures (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997).

Goldthorpe’s (2002) critique of Beck and Giddens rests on the interpretation of their work that they would expect the link between class backgrounds and life chances to be annulled in the process of individualization, despite the scattered caveats that they have stated to the contrary. Equally eager to debunk the individualization thesis, Atkinson (2010) nonetheless concedes that Goldthorpe’s attempt has been a ‘failed falsification’ (pp.32-36). The kind of statistical analyses preferred by Goldthorpe may not be sufficient to capture the kind of qualitative shifts that individualization theorists have been proposing. Based on interviews with 55 Bristolians in either ‘dominant’ or ‘dominated’ class positions, Atkinson claims little evidence is found of an all-pervasive reflexivity, or at least one that would diminish the relevance of class. Instead, he views their movements through the educational system and the labor market as more adequately explained by a Bourdieusian framework, that is as the outcomes of classed habitus and being drawn towards those life options that appear ‘natural’.

Where Goldthorpe mobilizes rational action theory in order to explain the persisting influences of class, Bourdieu is the proponent of a different approach, which has eventually come to dominate the sociology of class. Where Bourdieu would agree that life chances are indeed structured by class backgrounds, his emphasis on habitus and cultural capital provides the ground for explanations that differ sharply from Goldthorpe’s, where young people and their parents make calculative decisions based on financial costs and benefits and the desire to avoid social degradation. For Bourdieu, a group of individuals occupy similar class positions in social space when they command a similar volume and composition of economic and cultural capital. Moreover, they are likely to have similar habitus, and thus to hold similar dispositions and interests and to develop similar attitudes and practices (Bourdieu, 1985, p.745).

The key concept of habitus is often pitted against both rationality and reflexivity, as it operates chiefly outside the scope of conscious deliberation. Habitus can be defined as embodied dispositions for judgment and action. It endows people with a practical sense and a feel for the game, but at the same time indicates a modus operandi that is heavily conditioned by social influences. It is subtly internalized through lived experience, in primary socialization and in later immersions in social fields, and takes quite dissimilar forms for people in dissimilar class positions. The habitus is both socially produced and tends to encourage behavior that ultimately reproduces social hierarchies (1990, pp.53-5).

Like Goldthorpe, Bourdieu assigns a major role for the school system in reproducing class differences. While a manifest function of education is transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next, a more concealed function consists of simultaneously transmitting the
relations of class dominance from one generation to the next. The curriculum reflects the legitimate culture and the values and taste of the dominant classes. In the school context, the offspring of the dominant classes are rewarded for their privileged habitus and their familiarity with the legitimate culture, which they have already acquired in primary socialization. However, with the school system’s appearance of equal opportunity and meritocracy, these processes are not normally recognized for what they are by teachers, pupils or parents (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Different approaches to class analysis, exemplified here by Goldthorpe and Bourdieu, find common ground in the core idea that class backgrounds have an impact on life chances, with the education system taking a central mediating role. The concept of life chances originates with Weber, who defined classes by the life chances of their members. Life chances may be understood as the opportunities an individual has of attaining desirable outcomes in terms of income and position. Moreover, life chances are determined by one’s relation to commodity and labor markets (Weber, 2010, p.138). From Weber’s groundwork it only requires a short step to suggest a likely transmission of life chances from one generation to the next within the family – through the direct influence of market-derived resources, and more indirectly through allocation to different stände with concomitant lifestyles and social associations.

2.3 Hybridization of individualization and class perspectives

As has been explained, Atkinson offers a view of incommensurability that is essentially the inverse of that of Archer. From opposite flanks of the debate, both authors treat the issue of habitus and reflexivity and by extension, class and individualization, very much as a question of either/or. It is my understanding that they stand as defiant proponents of incompatibility in a debate where scholars have increasingly been searching for middle-ground solutions. This is particularly so within youth research, with Furlong & Carmel’s 1997 account being influential and with Woodman (2009) twelve years later questioning the added value of repeating exercises of theoretical reconciliation. Within the sociology of class, scholars such as Savage (2000) and Ball (2003) have worked to integrate the individualization perspective into a Bourdieusian class framework. Simultaneously, there have been numerous attempts at conceptual hybridization of habitus with reflexivity (Sweetman, 2003; Adams, 2006; Elder-Vass, 2007; Mouzelis, 2007; Fleetwood, 2008; Sayer, 2010).

These developments have provided a wealth of arguments for reconciliation and a multitude of possible hybrid solutions. What I intend to do in the following is not to rehearse every argument or present every hybrid on offer in detail, but to crystallize three different routes to reconciliation. The first route is represented by those attempting conceptual hybridization at the level of the actor, between reflexivity and habitus. The second route entails addressing the two initial terms head-on and asking whether one could understand class processes as individualized over time, and whether individualization processes could be seen as classed in the way they affect the populace. The third route is that of Furlong & Cartmel’s (1997)
‘epistemological fallacy’, involving a detailed attention to differential effects at the subjective and objective levels.

The strand of conceptual hybridization has taken up intriguing questions such as whether we can exercise reflexivity in a habitual, embodied, automated manner – and whether we can achieve a reflexive awareness of our habitual modes of action, and perhaps employ reflexivity to kick our habits and break our habitual patterns. The discussion often leads to questions of interpretation – has each theoretical framework been given justice, or have concepts been stretched beyond their initial meaning in the exercise? Archer, for one, refuses take part willingly in what she calls a ‘shotgun wedding’ with the other side (2013, p.54). What complicates the courtship is that habitus has been theorized as embodied, naturalized, and essentially pre-reflexive, while reflexivity by definition entails conscious deliberations that go beyond habit and tradition. As such, it is hard to imagine a successful amalgamation that does not compromise important features of each concept.

The most convincing attempt at conceptual hybridization does not suggest a reflexive habitus or a habitual reflexivity (e.g. Sweetman, 2003), but insists upon a symbiotic coexistence (Elder-Vass, 2007). In order to function as competent humans, we have to rely both on automated modes of action and on our capacity to deliberate between options. Elder-Vass (p.342) gives the example of a final verdict on a difficult, reflexive decision, which is delivered in a language and a dialect that is very much embodied. In order to implement our conscious decisions, we have to mobilize previously internalized repertoires of action – otherwise, we would have to stop and deliberate before our every step and utterance. Depending on the situation, habit and deliberation are present in our actions to varying degrees – but we are always fundamentally dependent on both capacities.

The suggestion that class has become individualized over time is explicitly stated by Savage (2000). The argument is that increasingly, desirable class positions have to be achieved through an enterprising, middle class mode of self-assertion. As class analysis has abandoned its interest in class consciousness and class identities, a contemporary understanding of class, whether it holds Golthorpe or Bourdieu as its leading figure, is in fact already rather well aligned with the idea that class primarily works through the individual. While the competition for desirable positions appears to come down to individual, enterprising qualities, people come to the starting line with unequally distributed resources, and embodied orientations that may fit better or worse with the rules of the game.

The inverse idea, that individualization processes may be seen as classed, has appeared in different incarnations throughout the literature. A recurrent critique of Beck and Giddens has been that they describe as universal something that would be more accurate as a description of the experiences of societies’ most privileged sections (e.g. Brannen & Nilsen, 2005). The opening up of opportunities and the expansion of choice that individualization represents, may be an accurate description of developments only for those resourced enough to take advantage of them. Certainly, privileged sections of the population have usually been the first to take up higher education and postpone family formation, and first to employ new means of travel and communication. Although historical novelties sometimes spread quickly to the majority of the
population, Bauman (1998, p.18) insists that the technological obliteration of earlier obstacles in time and space does not homogenize conditions, but rather polarizes them, depending on the resources available to take advantage of novel channels. Similarly, the risks induced by individualization may be disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of the class hierarchy.

For Furlong & Cartmel (1997), the apparent paradox of persistent class effects within the individualized youth stage is resolved through the ‘epistemological fallacy of late modernity’. This entails a disjunction of the subjective from the objective level. The authors understand individualization as all-encompassing on a cultural level and at the level of young people’s subjective outlooks, but also as lacking the force at the objective level to alter the deep-seated mechanisms of class. As a pervading individualism comes to dominate the subjective level, young people become “(...) blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency” that continue to operate at the objective level (p.114). Although the problems and challenges young people face are often structurally produced, they rarely seek out collective solutions to them. Should they have difficulty in realizing their individually determined goals, they have no recourse but to place the blame on themselves.

The first lesson to take from these different routes to hybridization is that individualization and class perspectives need not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Beyond this point, I would suggest that a clearer understanding of their interplay may be achieved by addressing the society-level terms of individualization and class head-on, than by taking the route through the actor-level terms of reflexivity and habitus. Attempts at hybridization of the latter two terms tend to remain at an abstract and intricate level. To the extent that there has been a quest to specify which groups of people may be designated as ‘reflexivity winners’ and ‘reflexivity losers’ (Lash, 1994), it remains inconclusive (Adams, 2006; Farrugia, 2012). People in less fortunate circumstances are not necessarily less reflexive, and are not exempt from the cultural repertoires of individualism. For instance, studying homeless young people in Australia, Farrugia (2011) finds them employing a highly individualized subjectivity in accounting for their routes in and out of homelessness.

Convincing arguments can be offered detailing how class can be seen as individualized over time, or how individualization processes may be classed in their effects. At the same time, individualization has been theorized as a society-wide phenomenon, with implications for entire populations and not just their most privileged sections. It seems a reasonable approach to suspend conclusions until empirical examinations have been made, and to be open to the possibility that individualization may have both classed effects and democratic effects, depending on the domain under study. Furlong & Cartmel’s suggested separation of the subjective from the objective level can provide a useful starting point for sorting out such effects.
3. Data and methods

The present study combines statistical analysis of survey data with qualitative analysis of interview data. To some degree, there has been a visible overlap between theoretical and methodological divisions in the literature. That is, quantitatively oriented researchers have been able to demonstrate the continuing relevance of class, while many qualitative studies have found points of resonance with theories of individualization (Mills, 2007, p.77). Of course, there are also exceptions to this pattern, such as the numerous existing qualitative studies employing a Bourdieusian framework. The reader will recall that Atkinson’s (2010) reasoning in parting ways with Goldthorpe and opting for qualitative interviews, was based on an acceptance of the point that theories of individualization describe qualitative shifts that are not necessarily observable in social mobility statistics.

In any case, the tendency for theoretical disagreement to follow methodological lines speaks to the promise of combining methods. This is hardly a controversial stance among youth researchers, who have often combined survey and interview methods (e.g. Evans, 2002; Irwin, 2009; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). The underlying rationale in those studies as in the present one, is one where statistical analysis can uncover social patterns, while qualitative analysis can expand our understanding of young people’s subjective perspectives. However, because quantitative and qualitative research traditions have often been defined in opposition to one another, it is first necessary to take claims of incommensurability seriously.

The first section presents what is known as the methodological ‘incompatibility thesis’, and assesses three viable strategies for refuting it. The chapter then proceeds by presenting the survey data, before describing the strategy that was developed to recruit interview participants. The fourth section describes the process of collecting interview data, while the fifth section assesses the ways in which data sources have been linked at the analytical level. Finally, the chapter concludes by detailing the procedures that have been followed in order to ensure ethical research practice.

3.1 Complementarity or incompatibility?

Historically, the divide between quantitative and qualitative methodological camps has been sharper than it is presently. The practice of combining methods has gained acceptance and momentum since the so-called paradigm wars of the 1980s. There is a growing methodological literature on mixed methods research. A recurrent argument within this literature is that quantitative and qualitative methods have complementary strengths, and thus that there is much to be gained by combining them. While statistical generalization is possible through the use of quantitative methods, qualitative methods can explore how individuals interpret and make sense of their life situations. While this sounds promising, it is important to be aware that quantitative and qualitative research methods in the social sciences have grown out of very different philosophical traditions, which in turn are based on quite different axiomatic assumptions. The ‘incompatibility thesis’, which mixed methods researchers
necessarily define themselves in opposition to, states that these assumptions are not only
dissimilar, but also fundamentally incommensurable.

Among those who have argued the case for incompatibility are qualitative methodologists
Guba and Lincoln (1982). They see quantitative research as based on a rationalist paradigm,
whereas qualitative research is based on a naturalist paradigm. The two paradigms take
diametrically opposing stances with regard to central philosophy of science issues: concept of
reality (single, tangible vs. multiple, intangible), the researcher-subject relationship
(independent vs. interrelated), truth statements (nomothetic vs. idiographic), explanation
(causality vs. contextualization), and the role of values (value-free vs. value-bound research).
In their view, a compromise between the basic assumptions within either paradigm is simply
unviable, tantamount to “(…) a compromise between
the view that the world is flat and the
view that the world is round” (1988, p.93). Rather, the sensible researcher must choose one
and only one set of basic assumptions to guide her inquiry (1982, p.250).

In opposing the incompatibility thesis however, mixed methods researchers have at least three
strategies available to them. First, they can question the assumption that paradigm should
dictate research. According to Howe (1988), this is neither a healthy ideal, nor an accurate
description of social science practice. Instead, there should ideally be a reciprocal relationship
between the two levels. Paradigmatic assumptions should also be open to reformulation based
on lessons from empirical research. Second, mixed methods researchers can question the
accuracy of Guba and Lincoln’s paradigm dichotomies. In their purest forms, both positivism
and social constructivism are quite marginal positions in contemporary social science. The
proposed dichotomies should rather be treated as continua (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009,
pp.93-96). Researchers are bound to treat fundamental questions of ontology, truth, and social
science in different ways. Many of them will seek out middle-ground solutions to difficult
problems.

A third strategy is to claim American pragmatism as a paradigmatic foundation for mixed
methods research. Mixed methods researchers often align themselves with pragmatism
because it can build bridges between the philosophical assumptions underlying quantitative
and qualitative research. Dewey rejected central philosophy of science dualisms such as world
vs. mind and objectivism vs. subjectivism, insisting instead that knowledge is always the
product of thinking plus action, and that knowledge is always at the same time both
constructed and real (Biesta, 2010). Several philosophy of science issues have to be accepted
as dilemmas, which cannot be resolved by philosophical arguments. Indeed, pragmatism can
be read as a critique against philosophers generating ‘insoluble pseudoproblems’ when
theorizing grand concepts like truth and reality (Howe, 1988, p.15).

3.2 Survey data

The survey data utilized in the articles are drawn from the third wave of the LUNO
(Longitudinell Ung i Oslo) study. The three questionnaires were administered between 2006
and 2010 by the research institute NOVA (Norsk institutt for forskning om oppvekst, velferd og aldring). The first two waves were carried out during the last two years of middle school, at the ages of 14 and 15. By the third wave, most respondents had turned 17 and were in their sophomore high school year. The primary focus of LUNO was the domain of education – how well adjusted did respondents feel in school, how did they fare in terms of grades, what were their preferred choice of high school program, what were their aspirations for higher education? Publications based on LUNO data have studied changes in academic aspirations (Hegna, 2010; 2014), social adjustment among ethnic minorities (Froyland & Gjerustad, 2012; Hegna, 2013), and academic achievement and classroom behavior in a gender perspective (Borg, 2015).

As an employee at NOVA between 2008 and 2010, I worked on the third data collection. I was also included in the process of determining questionnaire batteries. The batteries that would eventually be analyzed in article 1 and 3 were formulated ‘from scratch’ by project head Kristinn Hegna and myself. The battery analyzed in article 2 uses survey items that have a long history in the study of work values. The intention of each battery was to examine the social patterns behind the respective aspects of future orientations in question: understandings of assets and obstacles on the way to reaching future goals (article 1), ideals for future work as colored by self-realization ideals or otherwise (article 2), expected timing of adult markers, and plans for international mobility and gap years (article 3).

The surveys were administered in coordination with Oslo schools. The entire cohort of Oslo middle school pupils born in 1992 was initially invited to participate. Participation was contingent upon on gaining the consent of schools, parents, and prospective respondents. The greatest incidence of attrition occurred in the run-up to the first wave. Eleven schools, accommodating a total of 744 pupils, opted out of the study. Additional sources of attrition at that time included respondent non-consent, parental non-consent, failure to bring the consent form to parents and back to school, and being absent from school at the time reserved for survey completion. From the full cohort estimated to be around 4700 individuals, the number of participants in the first wave was 2328. Roughly 40% of the full cohort took part in the third wave (N:1865).

It can reasonably be assumed that a large part of the attrition is simply random and unsystematic. That being said, it is likely that at least a portion of it is associated with how well adjusted pupils are in school. Froyland & Gjerustad (2012) have assessed the attrition and representativeness of the dataset. Comparing the first wave sample with that of the larger 2006 Young in Oslo sample, there is a slight overrepresentation of females and of young people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, while the proportion of ethnic minority youth is similar. Secondly, attrition from waves one to three is somewhat more frequent among respondents who reported ‘problem behavior’, low grades, or low college aspirations in the first wave. However, they conclude that these imbalances are slight, and unlikely to impact results in a serious way.

The way in which socioeconomic background is operationalized in the articles warrants a discussion. The first article uses a dichotomous EGP class variable and a dichotomous
parental education variable. The second article uses a parental education variable with six categories, whereas the third article uses a threefold EGP class variable. The concern might appropriately be raised that this represents an inconsistent way of operationalizing socioeconomic background. Dichotomous and threefold class variables are crude rather than fine-grained, and parental education is not the same as parental class position. The discrepancy is the direct result of tailoring the variables to the needs of each individual article. This is not a matter of choosing the variant that produces desirable results, but of choosing the variant that makes sense and fits within the frame and analytical techniques of each article. In the second article for instance, the choice of the parental education variable followed from the objective of undertaking a comparison with US data, where information on parental occupation was not available. Within the third wave LUNO sample, three quarters come from either upper or lower service class backgrounds, while the remaining categories are rather small. A larger sample size would increase the utility of using a more fine-grained class variable. The statistical analyses undertaken in the articles are nevertheless able to ascertain the presence or absence of a link between socioeconomic background on the one hand, and the orientations of interest on the other hand.

The survey data are well suited for examining social patterns within the future orientations of interest. The logic behind statistical analyses of a reasonably large number of cases is that one may be able to identify patterns which cannot be seen by investigating fewer cases. Moreover, one can rely on widely accepted standards of scientific rigor, such as standardized means of testing hypotheses. However, both statistical analysis in general and survey research in particular carry certain well known limitations and challenges (e.g. Kelle, 2006). To mention a few of them, correlations may be spurious due to unobserved, underlying variables. To the extent that associations can be established as correlations, statistics alone may be insufficient in the quest to explain them. Furthermore, in order to undertake statistical analysis in the first place it is necessary to standardize one’s measures. This can entail imposing the researcher’s definitions on an empirical domain, which may be at odds with the understandings of the people inhabiting that domain. An additional problem in survey research is the hazard of response biases producing artificial results. One such potential bias, acquiescence bias, is dealt with extensively in the second article.

The curiosity that remains after obtaining the survey dataset is with young people’s own subjective perspectives – how they interpret and make sense of their present situation and their future. The survey does tap into subjective perspectives, but it does so through the format of pre-defined items, to which the respondent can attach one out of five pre-defined values. As such, it does not give respondents very much of a voice. On the basis of survey responses alone, one can only speculate about the deliberations and motivations behind orientations. Moreover, two respondents both reporting that having parents without higher education does not constitute an obstacle in life, for instance, may come up with very different justifications for their viewpoints. It is reasonable to assume that a deeper understanding of subjective perspectives can be reached by interviewing young people. Interviews allow participants to talk about their orientations, and it can be hoped that participants give a richer account of how they understand their own life situation, and how they think about their future.
3.3 Interview sampling

In my application for a PhD scholarship at the University of Oslo, NOVA granted me the opportunity to include the LUNO dataset. I was also allowed the opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews with volunteers from the survey. 965 respondents (51.7 %) had volunteered in the third wave to be contacted again for a prospective interview. However, volunteers from the vocational high school programs (N: 114) were defined as off-limits, because they were the target group for a different project at NOVA. Aside from this externally given limitation, there are likely self-selection mechanisms in taking part in a follow-up interview. The final interview participants have passed through a series of gates – participating in the three surveys, consenting in the final wave to being contacted for a prospective interview, answering the phone, agreeing to a time and place. Being a continuation of a research project that participants had encountered in a school context, interview participation may be associated with having positive experiences of school. It was my understanding that defining out the vocational segment, in combination with self-selection mechanisms, meant that I was likely to recruit interviewees who belong to a mainstream segment of Oslo youth.

While aware that the interview sample would not represent the full spectrum of Oslo youth, I held the ambition to recruit interviewees who would nonetheless have different orientations towards the future. The criteria for the sampling of interviewees were designed with the aim of maximizing such variation. Qualitative researchers often employ some form of maximum variation sampling, in order to generate contrasts that can drive the analysis (e.g. Creswell. 2007. p. 126). Specifically, I chose survey responses about intrinsic work motivation and international mobility plans as means to tease out variation in orientations. I constructed an index where the highest possible score would indicate a combination of strong intrinsic work motivation and a high reported likelihood of international mobility. Figure 3.1 describes all the selection mechanisms that go into the umbilical cord between the survey and interview samples. Taken together, it is a design that strives for maximum variation – within the mainstream.

Figure 3.1 Factors determining the interview sample

The strategy was then to impose two cut-off points and to recruit interviewees from two separate pools, where the first was defined by high scores on the index, and the second was defined by low scores on the index. Appendix 1 details the steps involved in the construction of the index. The underlying logic of the design was that in the first pool, I could expect to
find interviewees who conformed to the narrative of the individualization literature – by being mobile, flexible, and motivated by self-realization ideals. From the second pool, I might recruit interviewees who could provide a contrast, distancing themselves in one way or another from those presumably dominant ideals. The strategy was in part inspired by the mixed methods designs of Evans and colleagues (Evans, 2002; Woolley, 2005), as well as Archer (2007; 2012). In their own ways, both use survey responses in the domain of agency or reflexivity, to structure their qualitative data collection.

In the final interview sample (table 3.1) the two pools differ clearly in some respects, but only slightly if at all, in other respects. Unsurprisingly, the two pools differ clearly in their international orientations. As a result of the statistical relationship between social advantage and international orientation documented in article 3, participants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are predominately represented in pool 2. At the same time, many of these participants are on a path towards upward social mobility, and the college aspirations in pool 1 are almost matched by those in pool 2.

Table 3.1 Interview sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview sample (N:34)</th>
<th>Pool 1</th>
<th>Pool 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service class background</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning college</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning 5 year college</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current gap year</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning global travel or study abroad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Interviews

The interviews were conducted by a project group consisting of four MA students at the University of Oslo and myself. We formulated the interview guide (Appendix 2) in concert, and shared the resulting qualitative dataset. The interviews revolved around participants’ life navigation and orientations towards the future in a time of transition, and followed up on the themes from the survey batteries analyzed in the three articles. A central strength of the qualitative interview is that questions are open-ended and that responses do not need to adhere to pre-defined categories. Like most qualitative interviews, we had the clear intention that ours would be semi-structured, meaning that flexibility is allowed for interviewees to follow through on their trains of thought, and for the interviewer to pose relevant follow-up questions (e.g. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.47). As such, the ‘natural’ flow of the conversation takes priority over the structure of the interview guide. For this reason, the course of each interview is bound to be non-identical to the next, and there is a risk of simply overlooking some of the questions on the interview guide. To remedy this we also kept a shorter list of bullet points
with themes that were not to be forgotten. After the first few interviews, the interview guide was also slightly revised, accommodating interesting themes that had come up, whereas questions that did not seem to work as well were weeded out.

The interviews were carried out during the winter of 2011-2012 and the spring of 2012. They had a duration of 1-2 hours, and took place at various locations, in accordance with the wishes of the interviewee, mostly at central cafés or on the university campus. My own role in the overall process was not primarily that of interviewer, but that of coordinator and supervisor. I conducted only two of the interviews on my own, and sat in on as many of the other interviews as I could. In these interviews I took an auxiliary role, letting the MA student lead, and posing follow-up questions when I thought there might be something to be gained from them. Roughly half of the interviews were carried out without me present. The interviews were transcribed by the students, with the exception of the two interviews I conducted on my own.

Research interviews usually entail an asymmetrical relation of power between interviewer and interviewee (e.g. Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.52-53). We aimed for a relaxed atmosphere where interviewees would feel free to express their own thoughts. Interviewees were frequently reminded that there were no ‘correct’ responses to any of our questions. The relatively young age of the interviewers likely contributed to a feeling of being among peers who had only recently been in a situation similar to their own. If anything, the interviews where the 19-year-old participant was speaking to both a 25-year-old and a 31-year-old interviewer may have been the most prone to a sense of being outnumbered and among elders. Even in these interviews however, participants generally appeared confident and not afraid to correct our suggested interpretations of their responses. At the end of the interview, several participants stated that it had been a worthwhile experience and that they welcomed the opportunity to ‘think aloud’ about their future in a time of transition.

I used NVivo software as an aid in the process of structuring and analyzing the qualitative dataset. In the first reading, sections of responses were given very general codes, and in subsequent readings, they were given more elaborate, specific codes. Simultaneously, I kept an Excel sheet with a row for each participant, where what I deemed to be relevant categories were added gradually as columns. Throughout the analytical process, I had a particular focus on what appeared to be common among many or most of the participants, as well as on areas where they would diverge. When certain viewpoints or orientations are crystallized based on several accounts, and after a certain point echoed in subsequent interviews, it may be taken as indicative that they are widespread outside of the interview sample as well (e.g. Bertaux, 1981). At the same time, I wanted to be alert to potential deviations and voices of dissent.

3.5 Analytical linkages

Within the mixed methods literature, two fundamental principles in particular are intended to guide empirical inquiries. The first is known as the ‘dictatorship of the research question’, that
is, to choose the combination of methods that works best for answering one’s research question, and to bracket concerns about methodological paradigms in doing so (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.129). Secondly, methods should be combined in such a way that they complement each other’s strengths, and/or compensate for each other’s weaknesses (p.35). If this can be accomplished, the researcher may also be able to claim an added value of the end product vis-à-vis the individual quantitative and qualitative components (Bryman, 2007, p.8).

Moreover, scholars have sought to chart and map out the many different ways in which quantitative and qualitative research have been, or may be, combined. This has resulted in several elaborate typologies, each slightly different from the next (e.g. Morse & Niehaus, Ch. 2; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Ch.7, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Ch.3). In a sense, there are no limits to how different methods may conceivably be combined, as each project will develop its own idiosyncrasies as it proceeds. This makes it hard to conform to pre-existing typologies, unless the researcher holds this as an important goal in itself from the outset. Having said this, I do find this kind of charting work helpful in clarifying the structure of my own design. Figure 3.2 illustrates the overall research design of the present study.

Figure 3.2. Research design

Section 3.3 described the upper horizontal arrow, linking the two data collections. The two vertical arrows illustrate the necessity of conducting analyses of each dataset separately, according to the dissimilar standards of quantitative and qualitative inquiry. Without the required analytical rigor in these separate processes, there can be no added value of combining methods. Finally, the bottom horizontal, two-headed arrow represents the integration of findings from the two datasets. This has been a process of going back and forth between data sources, with a view to how they may complement or contradict each other. Moreover, direction was given to this process by the research question and general purview of articles 1 and 3, which are based on both data sources.

The research question in article 1 was motivated by the discussion around the notion of the epistemological fallacy (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Did Oslo youth hold the impression that they are the sole architects of their own future, while taking external sources of support for granted? The survey included both a fixed-choice battery about the general importance of suggested assets and obstacles, and an open question where respondents were asked to name assets and obstacles in their own lives. Adding the interview data, the article thus analyzed a total of three different data sources. The data resulting from the open question may be
regarded as a qualitative source, with respondents offering their own words and sometimes a full paragraph, rather than ticking pre-defined boxes. At the same time these data were also suitable for coding and counting.

As explained in the article, the process of coding and analyzing the open question data led to the exposition of a flaw in the fixed-choice battery (its lack of ‘internal obstacles’), and a clarification of the conceptual logic underlying the investigation as a whole. The two-by-two typology of internal/external assets/obstacles was then used as a heuristic tool to organize and analyze the data from all three data sources, and to integrate findings across data sources. Furthermore, while the survey data were useful in establishing dominant viewpoints at the aggregate level and the impact of background variables, the interview data offered complementary insights, into how participants justify and account for their viewpoints, and how subjective understandings may take different forms for participants from dissimilar social backgrounds.

Qualitative interviews have the forte of opening up a window into participants’ subjective understandings, and avoid the pitfalls of imposing pre-defined, standardized categories. At the same time, the limited number of cases and the unclear scope and transferability of findings remain problematic features. In article 3, additional steps were taken in order to deal with this challenge, generating further analytical linkages in the process. Most of the interview participants (N: 26) had been students of the academic high school program, the mainstream option among twelve different programs in the Norwegian context. In an effort to clarify the scope of the qualitative findings, the remaining eight interviews were defined out of the qualitative dataset for this article. This step was coupled with the inclusion of the high school program variable in the quantitative analysis, making it possible to establish a profile of academic program students in comparison with the students of the other programs – in terms of background variables, college aspirations, and the dependent variables (expected timing of adult markers, and plans for gap years and global travel). In this way, an externally given limitation was modified (even exaggerated, as a larger share of the population was defined out) and then mobilized as a strength.

Finally, I want to make the case that even article 2, which deals exclusively with quantitative data, benefits from an insight that is embedded in the mixed methods literature. That is, although different methods are based on different underlying assumptions – the researcher does not have to commit to one set of assumptions. Rather, the researcher is likely to benefit from at least considering more than one set of assumptions, and potentially finding ways to combine their strengths and/or compensate for their weaknesses. Even within survey research, there are competing methods of measuring values – should the questionnaire ask for ratings or rankings? Rating and ranking techniques both rest on assumptions about the ‘real’ structure of human values, assumptions that are, to a degree, mutually exclusive (Ovadia, 2004). Now, although the data analyzed are rating-based, in the second article I construct a relative measure of intrinsic versus extrinsic work values, thus reconstructing the data as ranked and not just rated. In the final analysis, benefits are reaped from entertaining dissimilar
assumptions, treating intrinsic and extrinsic work values as both: 1) separate and rated, and 2) relative to each other on a continuum and thus ranked.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The project has been approved (Appendix 3) by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). It aims to honor the ethical guidelines agreed upon by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH, 2010). Because the project had its root at NOVA and continued at the University of Oslo (UiO), an agreement was written up and signed, detailing the project plan while securing the interests of both institutions and privacy protection for participants.

As a longitudinal study, LUNO necessarily entailed storing person-identifying information. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality – anonymity in all forms of dissemination of results. They were not fully anonymous from data collectors at NOVA including myself, who depended on person-identifying information in order to follow up first wave and second wave respondents. When I first joined the project, I signed a confidentiality agreement detailing the extent of my access to the database. As I changed employees in 2010, I no longer had such access. The dataset I received to take with me to UiO was anonymized, albeit with casenumbers that NOVA could still tie to real names. In order to actually conduct follow-up interviews, it was acceptable to both NOVA and NSD that I would define two lists (as per the sampling strategy) of casenumbers, and in return I would get two lists of prospective interviewees with contact information – again in such a way that I would be unable to tie individuals to survey respondents.

An information letter (Appendix 4) signed by Kristinn Hegna and myself, using both NOVA and UiO logos, was sent to 100 prospective interviewees. The letter referred to their volunteering in the survey for a prospective interview, and stated that they would likely be contacted by phone. It explained the theme and purpose of the interview, and stated a guarantee of confidentiality and privacy protection. In order to collect the interview data, person-specific contact information was again necessary. Interviewees were not anonymous to the interviewer, but were guaranteed confidentiality, and anonymity in all forms of dissemination. In transcription, interviewees were given fictitious names. In dissertations and articles, certain details about participants were changed in order to prevent indirect identification. Informed consent was consistently ensured. We made sure that participants had a clear idea of the nature of the project. Both verbally and in text, it was stressed that participation was fully voluntary and that withdrawal was possible at any stage.
4. The Norwegian context

The main task of this chapter is to provide a context for the empirical analyses carried out in the articles. This entails first assessing the conditions for Norwegian youth in an international context, and secondly, assessing the conditions for Oslo youth in a national context. Additionally, the chapter addresses the imbalance within the data whereby a broad segment of Oslo youth on different educational tracks took part in the survey, whereas only students from non-vocational high school programs took part in the interviews. With this in mind it is thus useful to take stock of what can be established about the vocational segment. Finally, young people who struggle to complete high school, whether vocational or otherwise, are likely somewhat underrepresented in the survey, and absent from the interviews. While the study cannot claim to represent them, it is also worthwhile to appraise what is known about high school drop-out in the Norwegian context.

An understanding of the potential differences along all these axes can aid in contextualizing the present study. In accordance with the overarching theoretical theme of the study, the primary focus is with social patterns and the relevance of class, as well as how conditions may foster an extended, individualized youth stage. The chapter proceeds by discussing the circumstances for Norwegian youth within an international context. The second section presents empirical research that has demonstrated a continuing relevance of class in Norway, at least within the domains of social mobility, school grades, and academic aspirations. The third section assesses the differences and similarities between Oslo youth and Norwegian youth in general. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section on the vocational segment, drop-out, and marginalization.

4.1 Norwegian conditions in an international perspective

The temporal window between leaving home and later adult markers is wider on average in Norway than in most other European countries (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Kriesi & Buchmann, 2011). Norway has been widely classified as a social democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990) where for instance, college is tuition-free and student loans are comparatively affordable. Moreover, Norway has enjoyed several decades of economic growth, in no small part propelled by its oil sector. The Norwegian economy proved resilient in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, and only since 2014 has it begun to face more sinister challenges due to dropping oil prices. As participants look ahead approaching their 20s, they do so under conditions where the notion of an individualized youth stage should be highly salient. Demographic statistics, affluence levels, and welfare state provisions should all pull in the direction of affording young people time and resources to explore and establish their own identities, and to navigate as individuals rather than as part of a family.

As for the question of class and inequality, welfare state provisions as well as Norway’s reputation as a particularly egalitarian society, would perhaps suggest that class differences should be smaller in Norway compared to many other countries. In Hofstede’s (1980) widely
cited comparative scheme, Norwegian culture is classified as ‘feminine’ rather than ‘masculine’, favoring cooperation and concern for others over assertiveness and competition. Historically, Norwegian egalitarianism has been bound up with the notion of ‘the Norwegian unitary school’, in which systematic social inequalities would be counteracted by guaranteeing all children the same program of public schooling (Nilsen, 2010). While the number of private schools has been increasing in recent years, they still make up less than 7% of all elementary and middle schools (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014, p.16). Compulsory education, which was extended from nine to ten years in 1997, remains as a rather unitary track, and it is only in the transition to high school that the first significant juncture of differentiation occurs.

4.2 The impact of class in an egalitarian society

The aim of much Norwegian research has been to document the continuing relevance of class, even within this allegedly egalitarian society. However, the presence or absence of class differentials may be sought in many different domains. Primarily, the class analysis tradition leads scholarly attention towards social mobility, grades, and academic aspirations. To begin with mobility, Ringdal (2004) shows that the share of service class occupations increased significantly between 1973 and 1995, and thus by necessity, there has been a degree of upward absolute social mobility. As for relative social mobility, the study does document a certain increase over the course of the period – seemingly contrary to the ‘constant flux’ pattern found in other countries by Erikson & Goldthorpe (1992). In an international perspective, there is indeed some support for Norway, as well as Sweden, as comparatively egalitarian societies with high levels of relative mobility (Breen & Luijx, 2004). Even so, Ringdal is careful to stress the continuing impact of class backgrounds on life chances. For instance, 29% of men from upper service class origins could be found in upper service class positions in 1995, whereas the corresponding share for men from working class origins was 6% (Ringdal, 2004, p.259).

Despite the manifest intention for the unitary school system to level the playing field, the impact of dissimilar socioeconomic backgrounds is already visible in exam results at the middle school level. Using a ten-point measure of socioeconomic background comprising information about both parental education and income, Bakken & Elstad (2012a) show that pupils from the highest category outperform those from the lowest category by as much as 1.4 points on the six-point grade scale. In a previous study, Bakken (2007) furthermore showed significant social class gaps within aspirations for the future. This time using a five-category EGP class variable, middle school pupils from service class backgrounds reported substantially higher academic aspirations and higher ambitions for a high status occupation, while those with parents in manual occupation were more likely to report that they would be happy to quit school if they knew they could get a permanent job.

However, the same study also revealed an absence of class differentials on a host of questions about pupils’ everyday experience of school and their attitude towards school in general.
Norwegian middle school pupils tend to agree that school is a useful experience, and that it is important to get good grades. Irrespective of class background, majorities of 70-80% report being happy in school, learning important things in school, and getting sufficient attention and praise from teachers. Interestingly, similar majorities also agree to school being boring, too theoretical, and not sufficiently practical – again without visible class differences (Bakken, 2007).

In other words, while an ambivalence towards school is commonplace, general attitudes towards school do not appear to be systematically differentiated by class in the Norwegian context. These findings may be taken as a first indicator of an empirical split between the objective and the subjective level. While it seems clear that class continues to have an impact on life chances at the objective level, even within the allegedly egalitarian Norwegian society, young people from dissimilar social backgrounds may yet be on the same page when it comes to subjective domains.

4.3 Oslo youth in a national context

The data analyzed in the articles are drawn exclusively from the Oslo context, and thus findings cannot be taken to represent the whole country. Available statistics and previous research can thus be useful in indicating areas where Oslo youth differ from or converge with Norwegian youth as a whole. Oslo youth grow up in surroundings where transitions into traditionally adult roles normally occur rather late, perhaps even more so than in other parts of the country. For instance, available statistics show that in 2012, Oslo was the only county where the average age of first birth for women had surpassed the age 30 mark. By comparison, the average age was 26 or 27 in several of the more peripheral counties (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2014). However, youth mobility also plays an important part in this picture. While the urban setting may be conducive to a lengthy period of independent youth navigation, it is of course not exclusive to those who have grown up there. Heggen (2004, Ch.6) describes an ongoing centralization of the Norwegian youth population, with many young people from the periphery moving to the larger cities, where opportunities for higher education and work may be greater, and where they may also have their first child. Although the motivations behind individual moves differ, mobility is highest among those who take up higher education.

With a population of approximately 600,000, Oslo is by far the largest Norwegian city and moreover, it has a much larger share of ethnic minorities than smaller cities and rural communities. While on average, ethnic minority youth come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, research has demonstrated a high level of educational aspirations and a push towards upward mobility (Fekjær, 2007; Lauglo, 2010). Despite limited educational resources within the family and despite lower average grades, minority youth tend to have higher academic aspirations than the ethnic majority average – these associations are also observable within the LUNO survey data.
Oslo youth tend to get better grades and hold higher academic aspirations than the national average (Bakken & Elstad, 2012b; NOVA, 2013). Again however, socioeconomic background has a say in both areas. In a comparison of middle school grades between Oslo and the rest of the country, Bakken & Elstad find a similar statistical impact of their composite measure of parental education and income. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Oslo has a less egalitarian outlook than Norway as a whole, with higher concentrations of both privilege and relative hardship. Thus, parents of Oslo youth have a higher level of education and income than the national average (Bakken & Elstad, 2012b) while at the same time, rates of relative child poverty are highest in the capital (Kaur, 2013).

However, whereas Oslo youth differ from the national average in these respects, as well as in educational grades and aspirations, research also documents a range of areas where Oslo youth appear to be on the same page as Norwegian youth in general. NOVA has administered a series of national and local surveys, where such common ground is observable in attitudes towards school and well-being in school, in how they report parent-child relations, in their general feelings about Norwegian society, and in their optimism about the future (Øia, 2012; NOVA, 2013).

4.4 The vocational segment, drop-out, and marginalization

Attending a vocational high school program should not be taken to be synonymous with marginalization. However at the group level, the vocational segment is characterized by lower socioeconomic backgrounds, lower grades, higher risk of drop-out, and lower college aspirations, than those attending the academic program or one of the other programs qualifying for higher education. Students at the vocational programs have the option of taking a year of supplementary studies in order to qualify for entry into higher education, either in their third high school year, or after an apprenticeship. Even so, vocational students have substantially lower college aspirations than students at the other programs. The vocational programs recruit disproportionately from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the allocation to different programs follows traditional gender patterns to a large extent, with the healthcare program overwhelmingly female, and the other vocational programs disproportionately male. The regression analyses in article 3 furthermore reveal that vocational students tend to expect earlier transitions into adult roles, and are less likely to pursue global travel.

Middle school grades, themselves heavily influenced by socioeconomic background as we have seen above, are in turn the most powerful predictor for whether students choose a vocational program (Hansen, 2005; Markussen, et al., 2006). Studying the transition to high school in the Oslo context, Hansen (2005) found that roughly half of the variation in the choice of high school track was attributable to differences in grades. When holding grades constant however, there was still a significant impact of a parental education variable, and of a geographical east/west variable.
Grades also appear to be the principle predictor for high school completion (Markussen, et al, 2006; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014, Ch. 6). While nearly all young Norwegians (98%) commence high school the same year they complete middle school, a significant portion of each cohort have trouble in overcoming all the hurdles on the way to high school graduation. The average rate of completion overall is 72% within six years. Completion rates are substantially lower for the vocational high school programs, fluctuating between 57% and 62% over the period 2000-2012 period. While completion rates are particularly low for the weakest students, as measured by their middle school grades, this group has the best chance of graduating through the vocational programs, particularly those with well-established apprenticeship schemes, such as building and construction, and technical and industrial production. A recurrent, structural challenge however has been the rate at which apprenticeships are made available for vocational students, with one in three applicants still unable to enter. Incidentally, this juncture is also where drop-out rates are at their highest (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014, Ch.6).

The educational arena is only one among several arenas where young people may experience marginalization, but it can be said to be the most central one, at least while they are still in their teens. Marginalization may be understood as processes of weakening social integration on one or more such arenas, like family life, work, friendship circles, sports, or other organized leisure activities (Heggen, Jørgensen & Paulgaard, 2003, Ch. 5; Hammer & Hyggen, 2013). While it can be established that young people experiencing marginalization disproportionately come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, it is not at all clear that the individualization perspective should have less salience for them (e.g. Heggen, Jørgensen & Paulgaard, 2003, p.204). Although individualization brings increased choice, it also brings increased uncertainty and risk in connection with each choice, and shifts responsibility for dealing with that uncertainty and risk onto the individual.

In summary, Norway has not been spared from youth marginalization. According OECD (2015), one in ten Norwegians between 16 and 24 are in the NEET category – not in education, employment, or training. At the same time, the Norwegian rate is the third lowest in all of OECD, paralleled only by Iceland and Luxembourg. The ‘mainstream’ profile of the interview sample in the present study precludes an empirical interrogation of youth marginalization. The survey data on the other hand encompasses the vocational segment. Young people from working class backgrounds are represented in both data sources. As such, the articles maintain an empirical focus both on class and on educational trajectories, within and outside the mainstream.
5. Article summaries

5.1 Individualized youth subjectivity and social background: Subjective understandings of advantage and disadvantage among Oslo youth

Published in *Journal of youth studies*, 2014, 17(6), 733-748.

This article combines survey and interview material where participants judge the relevance of different factors for achieving one’s goals in life. The conceptual scheme used in the article groups such factors into assets and obstacles, which can be either internal or external to the individual. In debates about youth subjectivity, individualization, and class, late modern youth have been portrayed as embracing an individualist mindset, while structural patterns of inequality have become obscure and hard to recognize, even though they persist on an objective level.

The study does identify a strong support for individualist values among participants, with consensus forming around the ideas that young Norwegians have virtually limitless options available to them and that hard work is what matters most for achieving one’s goals. When discussing obstacles, they are more likely to focus on self-discipline than on structural disadvantage. However, participants are more ready to validate external factors when they appear as assets. In particular, most agree that having ‘supportive parents’ is a useful asset. Although opinions on the matter are divided, majorities also believe that more specific family resources (economic, educational, social) can be important.

Participants from relatively less privileged backgrounds are somewhat less likely to acknowledge the importance of external factors. Unwilling to claim disadvantage, they find ways to redress their modest starting points as motivating factors, and insist that a lack of specific family resources can be trumped by emotional support and/or individual hard work and determination.

5.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation among US and Norwegian high school students

Published in *Young*, 2015, 23(4), 293-312.

This article compares the work motivations of Oslo high school students with those of American high school students, and examines the impact of background and intermediate variables in both contexts. As the work arena has undergone major restructuring over the last several decades, intrinsic work motivation has been put forward as an emerging dominant work ethos. The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic work values aims to separate the motivational force of self-realization through engaging with the tasks of a job, from that of obtaining external rewards as a result of work. Two indexes are constructed where motivation based on creativity, learning, and skills development represent intrinsic values, whereas
motivation based on pay, prestige, and career advancement represent extrinsic values. Additionally a relative intrinsic–extrinsic index is introduced, imposing a relative preference, and canceling out acquiescence bias.

Results indicate that young Americans are more motivated by extrinsic rewards than their Oslo counterparts. In both contexts, ethnic minority youth and young men are more extrinsically oriented than ethnic majority youth and young women. Intrinsically, work aspects are most highly valued by young women, students who get good grades, and in the Oslo case, students at the Music, dance, and drama high school program. In a break with previous studies, little evidence is found of parental education influencing work motivation in either context.

5.3 Within and outside the mainstream: Social class and emerging adulthood in a Norwegian context

Submitted for review to Emerging Adulthood

This article combines interview and survey material to interrogate the relationship between emerging adulthood and social advantage in the case of Oslo youth. The mainline of critique against Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood has been that it deals insufficiently with inequality, and generalizes the experiences of a mainstream segment of contemporary youth.

26 interviews with graduates from the academic high school program are analyzed thematically using Arnett’s five pillars of emerging adulthood. Subjectively, interviewees from dissimilar social backgrounds had similar outlooks along the three pillars of feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood, possibilities, and self-focus. However in their navigation of the transition away from high school, interviewees revealed different approaches towards the remaining two pillars, identity exploration and instability. These differences may be related to class background, with those from the most privileged backgrounds adopting a particularly mobile and open-ended orientation, whereas interviewees from working class backgrounds were more settled in their plans and sketched a more stable trajectory going forward.

In a broader survey with high school sophomores, respondents were asked about their expectations for the timing of adult markers and their plans for gap years and international mobility. Whereas the option of taking a gap year appears to be relevant across the social spectrum, regression analyses revealed social class to have a strong impact on mobility plans, and an indirect impact on adult marker expectations, working through different educational trajectories.
6. Concluding discussion

The starting point for this dissertation is the long-standing theoretical debates over individualization, class, and youth. Where the individualization literature has led scholars to interrogate young people’s reflexivity, the class perspective directs attention to outcomes within the educational system. As a highly abstract concept, reflexivity does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation, and the quest to specify which groups of young people may be ‘more’ or ‘less’ reflexive, remains inconclusive. The articles in this dissertation have taken a different route, examining social patterns within domains that are also affected by the individualization process, but which are somewhat more empirically accessible. They each investigate different aspects of the future orientations of Oslo youth, with a particular focus on how they may or may not differ between young people from dissimilar social backgrounds. Taken together, they form the basis for an empirically rooted integration of individualization and class perspectives.

The participants in this study believe they have a virtually endless array of options open to them, and that hard work and determination is what matters most in achieving their goals. They tend to see very few obstacles in their way, other than the ones they themselves are responsible for. They hope to find work that is intrinsically meaningful, and are generally more motivated by self-realization than by the pursuit of wealth or prestige. In other words, participants appear to have embraced the cultural ideals that have emerged in the wake of individualization processes. Moreover, the extent to which these beliefs vary according to socioeconomic background, is very limited. Article 2 showed that parental education was not associated with intrinsic work motivation, or extrinsic work motivation for that matter, contrary to theoretical expectations and several prior studies. Article 1 showed a great deal of similarity between background categories in how internal and external assets and obstacles were judged. If anything, participants from less privileged backgrounds were even a little more keen to endorse individualist and meritocratic ideas, than their more privileged peers.

The beliefs just discussed can be placed on the subjective side of participants’ future orientations. Of course, there is a sense that future orientations can never be fully objective, as they point towards a future which is inherently uncertain, and once they materialize as concrete events, they are suddenly no longer about the future. Having said this, when aggregated, young people’s movements through the education system produce an observable, objective reality – and future orientations, in the form of educational plans and aspirations, play an important part in this picture. Although many participants, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds within the interview sample, are on a path towards upward social mobility, the widely documented association between socioeconomic backgrounds and academic aspirations is observable in the survey data. As has been discussed elsewhere in the dissertation, social class has both primary and secondary effects on how students fare in the education system (e.g. Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). In the Oslo context, the dynamics of class are already plainly evident in the differentiation that takes place in the transition from middle school into different high school tracks.
Similar arguments can be made about expectations for the timing of adult markers and expectations for international mobility. Statistical differences in such expectations are likely to materialize into different objective outcomes. As shown in article 3, expectations for the timing of adult markers depend in part on class background and educational trajectory. The class differences are greater when it comes to plans for international mobility. As increasing numbers take up higher education, the competition for desirable jobs may increasingly come down to an ‘economy of experience’, and candidates who have international experience may appear more attractive to employers (Heath, 2007). This is just one way in which international mobility can be viewed as an arena where social advantage may be reproduced. In Bauman’s (1998) thinking, increased opportunities for mobility do not level the playing field, but further privileges those who have the resources to take advantage of them.

When taken together, the totality of these findings indicates a schism between the subjective and the objective level. At the subjective level, Oslo youth appear to endorse the cultural ideals upheld by individualization – regardless of their socioeconomic background. At the objective level, background continues to impact life chances through its effects on the education arena. Moreover, class may play a part in how international youth mobility can be utilized for future gain. As has been discussed in chapter 4, an analogous subjective-objective schism was evident in Bakken’s (2007) study, which dealt exclusively with the education arena. While grades and aspirations were differentiated by class background, subjective experiences of middle school were strikingly similar across class categories.

To a high degree, these conclusions fit well with Furlong & Cartmel’s (1997) account, which highlighted the disjuncture between the subjective and the objective level. Their understanding of individualization as practically all-encompassing on a cultural level and in young people’s subjective outlooks, but also as lacking the force at the objective level to alter the deep-seated mechanisms of class, stands unchallenged by the empirical findings in this dissertation. However, the notion of the epistemological fallacy goes one step further, suggesting that the pervasive individualism prevents young people from recognizing mechanisms of inequality. In light of the findings of article 1, the phrasing of the epistemological fallacy appears somewhat overstated. While participants articulate individualist discourses, this does not prevent them from recognizing the relevance of family support, or the fact that particular resources may be unequally distributed.

Contemporary Oslo youth form their future orientations in an individualized context. At the same time, those orientations are to a degree shaped by class, particularly within the domains of education and international mobility. Youth from privileged class backgrounds are likely to do well in school and to pursue lengthy college educations, and thus to secure objective outcomes that would see their privilege reproduced. They are also more likely to be internationally mobile during their twenties, as students, volunteers, or backpackers, and may also be able to mobilize such experiences to their advantage. Importantly however, class differences are probabilistic and far from one-to-one, and Oslo youth from dissimilar class backgrounds approach their future with a similar frame of mind – a similar individualistic, optimistic subjectivity.
In other empirical contexts, the overall picture may look different. However, class differences in education have been documented as persistent in an excess of contexts and if anything, they are likely to be greater in many other countries. It is also plausible that youth cohorts in other countries have more diverging subjective views about individualism and self-realization. Contextual circumstances such as affluence and a social democratic welfare regime may contribute to greater subjective uniformity. At the same time, individualization has been theorized as society-wide and even transnational. Although young homeless Australians (Farrugia, 2011) face radically different conditions from those facing young privileged Norwegians, they are embedded in the same late modern culture of individualism and appear to employ a similar individualized subjectivity. The second article of this dissertation found little or no impact of parental education on the extent to which young people endorse intrinsic work ideals, either in the US context or in the Oslo context. Having said that, the present study has far from exhausted the ways in which the interplay between individualism and social advantage may be studied. Future research may find more variation both between and within youth populations.

To be clear, individualization is not merely a subjective phenomenon. On the objective level, historical macro-processes have widened the scope of individual choice, increased the uncertainty that surrounds individual choices, and increasingly placed the responsibility of dealing with such uncertainty, with the individual. While at first glance it may seem paradoxical that these processes have not leveled the playing field and canceled out the link between class backgrounds and life chances, there is no compelling reason why unequally distributed resources should cease to matter in an individualized society. On the contrary, family resources, whether economic, educational, or social, may even prove to matter more in a context of increased possibilities and increased uncertainty. Thus, while individualization may be viewed as democratic or universal, structurally producing increased choice across the board and culturally reinforcing individualism across the board – the arsenal of resources that an individual young person can mobilize in navigating this context, still depends on her social background.
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List of appendixes

Appendix 1: Sampling strategy memorandum

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Appendix 3: Letter of approval from NSD

Appendix 4: Information letter to prospective interviewees
Appendix 1: Sampling strategy memorandum

After obtaining the LUNO survey dataset, I had the opportunity of targeting specific sections of the respondent mass for a follow-up interview. The idea was to operationalize some of the dispositions proposed in the literature as intensified by the individualization process, and next demarcate a section of the respondent mass where those dispositions would be particularly prevalent. We would then recruit participants from this section, as well as from the opposite end of the scale – the respondents who place themselves the farthest away from such ideals. Specifically, the survey batteries on work motivation and future plans were explored for such a purpose. An index was constructed based on five items for intrinsic work motivation and two items for international mobility plans.

Intrinsic work motivation

The battery on work motivation asks respondents to rate on a 5 point scale how important they consider twelve different aspects of a future job to be. Principal component analysis enables the researcher to investigate patterns within the correlations between variables, and to uncover whether items in effect measure one or more dimensions of a construct. The technique reduces the items to a lower number of components, which are not to be correlated with each other, but which explain as much variance as possible. The analysis turned out three components. Table 1 shows how the items load on these three components, after coefficients under 0.4 have been excluded. The results correspond to a factor structure that has been widely reported within the study of work values (see article 3), where the first component may be called intrinsic work motivation, the second may be called social or altruistic work motivation, and the third may be called extrinsic work motivation. Three items score over 0.4 on more than one component. In these cases, I gave the intuitive interpretation priority over the size of the loadings. Thus, the learning, skills, and different jobs items were defined as intrinsic.

Among the six items loading on the intrinsic work motivation component, one was excluded (imagination) because it was almost identical to another variable (creativity), and as a variable behaved in an almost identical fashion. The five items that went into the sampling criteria are highlighted in bold in table 1. Cronbach’s alpha measures internal consistency for index, on the basis of the average of pairwise correlations, as well as the number of variables. Alpha can have values between 0 and 1, where a high score would indicate a high level of internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha for the five items that went into the index was high at .809. Pairwise correlations between them ranged from .363** to .668**.

A respondent who rates intrinsic features of work as very important, can be said to be well aligned with a particular late modern work discourse that has been identified by commentators of different theoretical stripes. It is a discourse that emphasizes autonomy, creativity, flexibility, and mobility, and that views work as an arena for self-realization. The credo is
expressed in the slogan ‘love what you do’, and suggests that one should ‘live to work’, rather than the outmoded, inverse rationale.

Table 1. Rotated component matrix on work motivations battery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That I get to use my imagination</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it is creative work</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the tasks are varied</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I can learn something new</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I can use my skills and abilities</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I can do something for others</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the work benefits society</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I can work with people</td>
<td>0.668</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the job has high status/prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the job is well paid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I will be able to get promoted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I will be able to get different jobs throughout my career</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

**International orientation**

The battery on future plans asked respondents to indicate, using a 5 point scale, the likelihood of undertaking certain projects before the age of 25. The principal component analysis turned out four components. Table 2 shows how the variables load on these four components, after coefficients under 0.4 have been excluded. The results are intuitive for the first component, as all five variables can be viewed as transitional markers for adulthood. Furthermore, the two items indicating an international orientation load on the same component. Although leaving the parental home and taking up student loans appear to be related to international mobility, these two items were left out of the sampling criteria, because they did not seem relevant to the purpose. One plausible interpretation of the third component could be that all three items entail deviations from the linear trajectory of going directly from high school to college. The two items that went into the sampling criteria are highlighted in bold in table 2. Cronbach’s alpha for an index of these two items was at .681. The correlation between the two items was .517**.

Respondents planning both these forms of travel must be said to be particularly oriented towards international experience, and particularly attuned to a cosmopolitan discourse that
emphasizes the merits of ‘broadening one’s horizons’, getting to know other cultures, and ‘going before it’s too late’. There may be quite different motivations for undertaking the two kinds of travel project, for instance, studying abroad may reflect the goal of building lasting credentials, whereas other travel may be more about momentary fun and leisure. At the same time, backpackers may emphasize the learning and character building aspect of their journey, while exchange students may emphasize the fun and excitement of their experience. Empirically in the data material, there is a strong correlation between the two items.

Table 2. Rotated component matrix on future plans battery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
<th>Component 3</th>
<th>Component 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get a permanent job</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move in with a partner</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have children</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn enough to support myself</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy a car</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel outside Europe for 2 months or more</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up student loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move out of my parents' house</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.653</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a temporary job while considering my options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve my high school grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve in the army</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start my own business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.751</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The intrinsic/international index

In the subsequent step, the intrinsic work motivation index and the international orientation index were merged together. The two components were assigned equal weight, meaning that the two international mobility items count as much as the five intrinsic work motivation. The sampling strategy excludes the middle section from interview participation. The middle section is populated by respondents who have a medium score on both components, as well as those who have a high score on one component and a low score on the other. Although the idea of merging the two components together presumes a certain affinity between them, no assertion is made of a one-to-one relationship. It is necessary to be aware that the sampling strategy may exaggerate the extent to which intrinsic work ideals and international orientation go together. The correlation between the intrinsic and the international index is .193**, suggesting that there is an empirical relationship, but that it is moderate rather than very
strong. Cronbach’s alpha for the full seven items is high at .749, although it must be kept in mind that a high number of items can inflate the measure.

Respondents who score high on the intrinsic/international index both endorse the view of work as an arena for self-realization, and aim for extensive international experience in the years to come. They are travelers who embrace flexibility and creativity – they find something attractive in both ‘love what you do’ and ‘go before it’s too late’. Setting a cut-off point close to the higher end of the scale, half of the interviewees were to be recruited from a pool of ‘mobile authenticity seekers’. This is where I expected to find the participants closest to recurring ideal types in the literature, such as the ‘reflexivity winner’, the ‘tourist’, or the ‘creative worker’.

Setting a second cut-off point towards the lower end of the scale, I also wanted to recruit a contrast group from the opposite end of the spectrum. Expectations about this pool were less clear. What characterizes respondents with a low intrinsic/international score is that they are unenthusiastic about both the issues in question. They are not particularly tempted by overseas experience, nor do they embrace intrinsic work ideals. In the larger pool of eligible participants, their orientations are as distant to those of the example group as they can be. As such, the strategy increases the chances of finding participants who voice critique or frustration with dominant ideals.

In a first step, I defined two cut-off points and demarcated two pools so that I would have roughly 180 individuals in each, within the full sample of survey respondents who had responded to all seven items (N:1712). Figure 1 shows how the respondent mass is distributed along the index, and illustrates the strategy of recruiting interviewees from both ends of the index.

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents along the intrinsic/international index
The top section of table 3 presents a social profile of the two pools before any modifications have been made. Although the gender dimension has not been a primary focus in this dissertation, the analyses in article 2 and 3 show female respondents being both more intrinsic and more international in their responses, than male respondents. This means that female respondents are much more likely to appear in pool 1 than in pool 2. Pool 1 respondents are more likely to come from more privileged class backgrounds, and more likely to aspire to longer college educations, than pool 2 respondents. At the same time, these differences are probabilistic rather than clear-cut. Furthermore, the proportion of interview volunteers is higher in pool 1 than in pool 2, and importantly, students at the vocational high school programs are substantially more frequent in pool 2 than in pool 1.

The bottom section of table 3 shows characteristics of the two pools after three specific modifications have been made: defining out non-volunteers, defining out vocational students (these were off-limits due to a separate research project at NOVA), and imposing a gender balance in pool 1. The latter modification entailed maintaining the cut-off point at 4.50 for females, but lowering it to 4.25 for males. The cut-off points were moreover defined so that I would have roughly 100 potential interviewees in each pool. Although these respondents had consented in the survey to being contacted again for a prospective interview, there was no guarantee that we would be able to reach them two years later, or that they would in fact be willing and able to participate. Our experience was that recruitment was somewhat more difficult in pool 2 than in pool 1. In addition to the gender balance, the social profiles of the two pools in terms of class background and college aspirations, also became somewhat more similar after these modifications, due to the selection mechanisms involved in volunteering.

Table 3. Characteristics of the two pools before and after modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full sample (N:1712)</th>
<th>Pool 1</th>
<th>Pool 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index range</td>
<td>4.50 to 5</td>
<td>1 to 2.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational high school program</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer for interview</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service class background</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning college</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning 5 year college</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>After modifications (N:832)</th>
<th>Pool 1</th>
<th>Pool 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index range</td>
<td>4.25 to 5</td>
<td>1 to 2.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service class background</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning college</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning 5 year college</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Interview guide

Thank you for coming
Did you receive the information letter?
Explain the project
Are you okay with me recording the conversation?
The sound file will be transcribed and anonymized
No information you give will be traceable back to you
There are no right or wrong answers
If you wish, you can withdraw from the project at any time

Background
Which high school did you attend?
Where do you live?
What do your parents do? (work, education)
Do you feel connected to your neighborhood?

The present
What does it feel like to be finished with high school?
Did you consider other alternatives for this year?
Did friends or parents have an opinion on what you should do?
Why do you think some people move out right after high school while others stay?

The future
What plans have you made for the next few years?
Do you have a dream job or other dreams about your future?
Where do you see yourself in ten years’ time?
What do you hope to have done or achieved by then?
What is most important to you in a job?
Do you think you will have many different jobs?
What do you think it means to be an adult?
**Assets and obstacles**

What do you think matters most in achieving one’s goals?

What do you think about the expression ‘Every man is the architect of his own fortune’?

Is there anything that makes it hard for you to achieve your goals?

Do you enjoy any advantages that make it easier for you in life?

Do you think all young people in Oslo have more or less the same opportunities in life?

Do you think your parents had the same opportunities as you when they were your age?
Appendix 3: Letter of approval from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Jens Lunnan Hjort
Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgiografii
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1096 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Vår dato: 24.10.2011
Deres dato: 
Vår ref: 28409 / 3 / 8
Deres ref: 

KVIDTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 14.10.2011. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

28409 Klasse og individualisering i utformningen av Oslo-ungdommers fremtidspianer
Behandlingsansvarlig Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Jens Lunnan Hjort

Personvernnombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernnombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Vennlig hilsen
Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Inga Brautaset

Kontaktperson: Inga Brautaset tlf: 55 58 26 35
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Hei!

Du har tidligere deltatt i spørreundersøkelsen LUNO (Longitudinell Ung i Oslo), i likhet med om lag 2500 andre Oslo ungdommer født i 1992. I forbindelse med oppfølgningsprosjektet LUNO – Young Perspectives, ønsker vi nå å intervjuer 40 LUNO-deltakere som har takket ja til å bli kontaktet på nytt. Du er trukket ut blant dem vi gjerne vil snakke med!

Utvalget er basert på hvordan LUNO-deltakere svarte på spørsmål om preferanser om fremtidig arbeid og utenlandsreiser. Formålet med intervjuene er å få et innblikk i Oslo-ungdommerns egne perspektiv på fremtiden og veien videre etter videregående skole. I tillegg til at du bidrar til å styrke kunnskap om ungdom i din situasjon, er et slikt intervju en fin anledning til å tenke høyt om hvilke ønsker, forventninger og planer du har fremover. Kanskje lærer du noe nytt om deg selv?

I løpet av den nærmeste tiden vil vi kontakte deg på telefon for å spørre om du kan tenke deg å bli med på et intervju. Intervjuet tar 45-90 minutter og finner sted ved UiO, eller et annet sted som passer deg bedre. Om du ikke bor i Oslo for tiden, kan vi gjøre intervjuet per telefon, eller vi kan avtale en tid du er hjemme på ferie.

Det er selvfølgelig frivillig å delta, og du har også rett til å trekke deg fra undersøkelsen både under og etter intervjuet uten forklaringsplikt. Intervjuerne er underlagt taushetsplikt og opplysninger fra intervjuet vil behandles konfidensielt. I fremtidige publikasjoner vil ingen deltakere navngis, og ingen opplysninger vil kunne spores tilbake til enkeltpersoner. Intervjuerne har heller ikke muligheten til å spore hva du har svart på enkeltspørsmål i spørreskjemaene.

Ta gjerne kontakt med Jens Lunnan Hjort på j.l.hjort@sosgeo.uio.no eller 22 85 52 64 / 94 100 119 dersom du har spørsmåll.

Med vennlig hilsen

Kristinn Hegna
Prosjektleder LUNO
NOVA
www.nova.no

Jens Lunnan Hjort
Ansvarlig LUNO – Young Perspectives
Universitetet i Oslo
www.sv.uio.no/iss
Articles