Middle-class in the making?

Tensions, conflicts and changes in the habitus of first-generation students in the humanities

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Summary

In this study I investigate what characterizes the educational experiences of so called 'first-generation students pursuing masters' degrees in the humanities at the University of Oslo. Norway's oldest and most prestigious university. Qualitative interviews with 9 students in various master humanities master programs make up the empirical basis. The broad stroke of the first-generation students' stories is one of coming from working-class households in peripheral and/or rural areas and entering, not only the academic world, but one set in a driven and urban environment.

Considering how students of a similar profile – with parents holding low educational attainment – has been found to favour the job security associated with shorter profession studies (see Askvik 2015) the student in my study can be said to have made an educational choice that goes against the grain. Particularly while also considering how the humanities is a subject area associated with both risk of low employability (see Lødding, Aamodt and Skule 2017) and the cultural fractions of the upper middle-classes (see Ljunggren 2017). Thus, this study also problematizes the potential tensions associated with mobilty towards a field in which embodied codes of conduct is seen as key (Friedman 2015).

To examine and analyze the first-generation students' stories I made use of a Bourdieusian inspired theoretical framework centered around the interrelationship between *habitus* and *field*. Due to their non-academic backgrounds, I considered the first-generation students' *newcomers* to the academic field (Bourdieu 2000). Potential ambivalences and tensions associated with what has been described as an 'awkward social positioning' (Bourdieu 2000) alongside possible *growth* dimensions associated with upward mobility (see for instance Curl et al 2018) made up the key point of departure of the analysis. Moreover, I draw on Diane Reay's *psychosocial* adaptation of Bourdieu's thinking tools, with an emphasis on how "the emotional underworld of individuals both extends and enrich the concept" of habitus (2015: 22). This allows for a greater understanding of how "the exterior – wider social structures – is experienced and mediated by the interior, the psyche" (Reay 2015: 9).

Through examining the first-generation students' stories, I analyzed some of the ways social class, in its embodied form of habitus – or internalized orientations and motivations – can shape students' experiences, -aspirations and identities through varying forms tension, conflicts and changes in habitus. I developed three analysis questions that addressed 1) motivations and

newcomer experiences in the academic field, 2) aspirations and its potential connection to sense of fit and misfit in the academic field, and 3) some of the ways in which the first-generation students constructed middle-class identities for themselves.

In the first chapter I investigated what motivated first-generation students to start university and what characterized their initial experiences as newcomers to the field. I suggested that a strong *desire for knowledge* was central in what drew the first-generation students to university and the humanities specifically. This represented a contrast to the utilitarian, or rather *responsible,* orientation towards education in their working-class home environments. And could be understood as a social *transgression* regarding embodied orientations towards the purpose of education. Moreover, I argued that self-comparison to student that *appeared* more familiar in the academic field, represented tension spurred by having a non-academic habitus in an academic context characterized by elite tendencies.

In the second chapter I investigated the how the first-generation students' sense of fit and misfit in the academic field could be seen as reflected in their experiences of *fit* and *misfit* in the academic field. I structured the analysis in this chapter according to a marked variation in the sample: One group oriented themselves towards work inside of academe and the other group were oriented towards 'master worthy jobs' outside of academe. I argued that their career orientations were characterized by negotiating between the potential to continue pursuing their intellectual *interests* in the humanities post-graduation and their need for material security in the form of favoring *responsibility.*

In the third chapter I investigated how the first-generation students emotional, energetic and investments towards the pursuit of a master's degree in the humanities represented *a question of identity* – of whom the first-generation students wanted to be as persons. I suggested that a quest for *respectability* (Skeggs 1997) could be understood as an undercurrent to the atypical educational choice the first-generation students had made – considering their social class backgrounds. I argued that the first-generation students engaged in the work of *constructing middle-class identities* for themselves. While many recognized the *tentativeness* of their current social position as master students their stories reflected a tendency that the participants had started to *feel like middle-class.*

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1: Introduction

What characterizes the experiences of 'first-generation students' pursuing master's degrees in the humanities at the University of Oslo?[1] The students I have interviewed in this project are the first in their family going to university. Their parents work in skilled and unskilled working-class occupations and as farmers. Students of a similar profile – with parents of low educational attainment – have been found to favor the job security associated with shorter *profession* studies (Askvik 2015) such as nursing, police, or kindergarten teacher. Considering this, the first-generation students in this project are going against the grain by choosing a long *discipline* study in the humanities; associated both with risk (see Lødding, Aamodt and Skule 2017) and the cultural fractions of the upper middle classes (see Ljunggren 2017). Additionally, the student's navigation of higher education as the first in their families, is set in the context of Norway's capital and its oldest and most prestigious university at campus Blindern.

The broad stroke of the first-generation students' stories can be considered one of "coming from the outside" to the academic world. The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu has referred to people that are undertaking a similar social transgression as *newcomers* to the field (org: *parvenus*, 2000: 163). Drawing upon a Bourdieusian inspired framework, I am analyzing the stories of nine first-generation students – who have made an atypical educational choice by pursuing the humanities – and their experiences of being newcomers in the academic field situated in what is possibly the closest "egalitarian" Norway is getting to an elite university. What motivated the first-generation students to pursue masters' degrees in subjects like history, philosophy, literature and art history? How did they see themselves in relation to peers they encountered at campus Blindern and in relation to peers from home? And what did the first-generation students see themselves doing after completing their degrees? These are some of the initial questions that motivated my thesis project.

This project has as its case how it is to have a non-academic background while pursuing the humanities at a highly regarded university. But what is special about this subject area? Unlike profession studies, discipline studies like the humanities, or social anthropology and sociology, does not teach students specific competency or skills needed for certain types of jobs. This

[1] The term 'first-generation student' has its origin in the United States and refer to students who are the first in their families to attain a bachelor's degree or higher. In the American context the term is used as an administrative category for statistical purposes, in programs working to mitigate educational inequality and as a descriptive construct in research (Auclair et al. 2008; see also Nguyen and Nguyen 2018).

makes the humanities an educational choice associated with more *risk* in terms of career prospects. In Norway, a masters' degree in the humanities is linked to lower employability – particularly underemployment in the form of work with low relevance – in comparison to other areas of study (Lødding, Aamodt and Skule 2017). Such findings fold into a larger picture in which the humanities frequently are under public scrutiny for their apparent low social relevance and utility. Moreover, a recent report from *Statistics Norway* demonstrates how humanistic and aesthetic study programs have the highest dropout rates in comparison to other areas of study (Howard Andresen and Lervåg 2022). In addition to the risk pertaining to low employability, it is possible that this level of student withdrawal from the humanities could reflect the independence and motivation needed to persist in these relatively open subject areas (Mangset 2010). The case of first-generation students in the humanities is also a problematization of the potential tension associated with mobility into, or in the direction of, the cultural middle classes[2] – in which embodied codes of conduct are seen as more pronounced than in fields dominated by economic capital (Friedman 2015). Are the first-generation students' academic middle-class in the making?

Apart from the particularities of the humanities as a case, the cultural gap between working-class environments and the academic world (see for instance Vassenden and Jonvik 2019 on such differences in Norway) made a central backdrop in this study. Considering the first-generation students upbringing in working-class type of environments and their present status as university students – they can be said to be exposed to these two different cultures. But were these differences a source of concern to the students? And in case: How were they perceived, experiences and handled? Dual field experiences have been thematized in literary depictions of *class journeys*[3] in a Norwegian context. Commonly known as achieving upward mobility from the working-classes to the middle classes by means of higher education. An individual

[2] In analysing social mobility – or field transgressions – Bourdieu (1984) stressed the need to differentiate between "vertical" and "transverse" movement (131). The controlling idea behind this attention to the direction of mobility is Bourdieus (1984) model of social class structures – *the social space* – which is a square made up of four quadrants organized according two main fields, the cultural fraction to the left and the economic to the right. Agents is placed in the social space according to volume and composition of capital. Considering how the first-generation students can be said to move from a position of limited cultural capital towards the humanities – associated with the high end of the cultural fraction of Bourdieus social space, their movement is one that can be considered transverse, or "diagonal" as Friedman has referred to it (2015). In comparison to vertical mobility, in which the acquisition of more of the same form of capital is the basic idea, transverse mobility is thought to require the attainment of an entirely new set of cultural capital, and associated dispositions (Bourdieu 1984: 132).

[3] In Norwegian: *klassereiser*

caught between the old and the new is oftentimes at the heart of both autobiographical (Sveen 2000) and fictional depictions (Seljestad 2005; Shakar 2020) of such class journeys. For instance, Kari Sveen, who became an author after conducting a class journey, wrote about experiencing "social cleavage" spurred by "shift in social belonging and cultural intricacy" (2000: 21, own translation). Subsequently, Sveen (2000) emphasized the "freedom" following her education and entrance to the middle-classes; but also, how she is left with "an instinctual sense of not being in the 'right' place anywhere' (21).

Similar descriptions of social complexities accord with international research on the subjective experiences of upwardly mobile (Curl et al. 2018; Friedman 2016; Granfield 1991; Kaufman 2003; Lehman 2009 and 2014; Mallman 2018; Reay et al. 2009). Mallman (2018) has referred to upwardly mobile as "people who simultaneously win and lose" and whose narratives "oscillates between the hopeful benefits and the painful costs of mobility" (25). Some of the costs described are separation from significant others and emotional distance to home (Lehman 2014; Mallman 2018; Kaufman 2003) shame and hiding of working-class origins (Granfield 1991) and ambivalent sense of self (Friedman 2016). Benefits described are broadening of one's cultural "horizon" (Curl et al. 2015 and Lehman 2014) "liberating" qualities of higher education (Reay et al. 2019) and opportunity to develop aspects of self not available at home (Aries and Seider 2005).

Despite much quantitative research in Norway on how parents' education level affects factors like choice of study (see for example Askvik 2015: Helland and Wiborg 2019) and academic performance (see for example Hansen 2011; Hansen and Mastekaasa 2006) there has been little qualitative research on the subjective experiences of how the low educational attainment of parents affect students in higher education. An exception is found in research on the academic middle-classes in Norway conducted by Sakslind, Skarpenes and Hestholm (2018; see Vassenden 2015 for similar findings); here the authors commented upon the relative ease it appeared that their informants had conducted their class journeys with.[4] However, where class journeys like those Sakslind, Skarpenes and Hestholm (2018) referred to, and autobiographical depictions like that of Sveen (2000) are portrayed form an established position in the academic middle-classes, the first-generation students I have interviewed are merely at the first step of what might become a class journey in hindsight. Where the previously mentioned tales of class

[4] For instance, they wrote about how "with a few exceptions" upwardly mobile working-class people did *not* describe "encounters with people of middle-class background" in terms of "personal drama of existential angst" (Sakslind, Skarpenes and Hestholm 2018: 127)

journeys is told from a point of having made it "successfully" into the middle-classes, the participants in my study were students who had no guarantees of where they could end up in terms of career or social class. In this study I am therefore contributing towards understanding the concrete experiences and social dynamics characteristic of students who are the first in their families to pursue higher education.

Sense of belonging, or of "one's place" (Bourdieu 1987: 5) in the academic world make up the starting point for understanding experiences of being humanities students *and* the first in their families going to university. In the analysis I refer to it as sense of *fit* and *misfit.* To investigate these sentiments, I deemed it fruitful to apply a Bourdieusian theoretical framework centered around the interrelationship between *habitus* and *field.* Habitus – understood as a 'socialized body' (Bourdieu 1998: 81) – is a construct intended to grasp the mediation between structure and agency (Wacquant 2016). In an ideal typical depiction, Bourdieu used the analogy of a 'fish in the water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127) to describe a complete fit between habitus and field. One characterized by the "effortlessness" flowing from "not feeling the weight of the water." However, Bourdieu also argued that the relationship between habitus and field is "never perfect" (2000: 157) and that the "extent" of fit and misfit between embodied orientations and social conditions varies (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). One expression of such mismatch is *split habitus* (Bourdieu 1999; 2007) characterized by 'competing loyalties' (Reay 2015: 11) between the old and the new aspects of self. Mismatch between habitus and field is frequently linked to being a *newcomer* to a field (Bourdieu 2000: 163). Like mentioned above, the participants in my study come from working-class and often rural environments to higher education, and the humanities. Therefore, I consider them newcomers in the academic field. The first-generation students' experiences as newcomers to the academic field, its central institution the university and is therefore what constitutes the point of departure of my analysis.

Research questions

Through examining the first-generation students' stories, I aim analyze some of the ways social class, in its embodied form of habitus – or internalized orientations and motivations – can shape students' experiences, -aspirations and identities through varying forms tension, conflicts and changes in habitus. Considering this, I developed three research questions based on the interviews and the theoretical framework:

1. *How did the first-generation students depict their motivations to pursue higher education and what characterized their stories of initial experiences as newcomers to the academic field?*

In the first question I investigate what drew the first-generation students to university. I am interested in how their desire for knowledge represents a contrast to the utilitarian, or rather *responsible,* orientation towards education in their working-class home environments. Moreover, I address how the first-generation students encounter with the academic field spurred various forms of insecurities and misfit – or tensions in habitus.

2. *In which ways are sense of fit and misfit in the academic field reflected in the first-generation students' stories the shaping and reshaping of their future aspirations?*

In this question I investigate how sense of fit and misfit in the academic field factored into the students' reflections on possible career opportunities with a master's degree in the humanities. I am interested in how the students negotiated the potential to continue pursuing their intellectual *interests* in the humanities post-graduation and their need for material security in the form of favoring *responsibility.* Are the students orienting themselves toward working in, or outside of, academe?

3. *In which ways are construction of middle-class identities – in light of various tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus – reflected in the first-generation students' stories?*

Here I am interested in what makes the first-generation students think pursuing a long course of study a worthwhile undertaking *beyond* their desire for knowledge and potential career opportunities. Particularly I'm looking at how the student's educational efforts can be understood as an investment in respectability and how tensions, conflicts and changes could factor into their construction of middle-class identities.

First-generation students in Norway

Despite much statistic on educational differences in Norway associated with parents' educational level (ssb.no) and quantitative research on the same topic (for instance Askvik

2015; Hansen 2011; Hansen and Mastekaasa 2006; Helland and Wiborg 2019) first-generation students is a group that has received little attention in Norway. In comparison, 'first-generation students' is an established identity in the United States – much like gender or minority status – applied in institutional diversity work and targeted programming aimed at mitigating the class-based disadvantages this group could face. Some of these documented challenges are impostor syndrome related to non-academic background (Reay et al. 2009), hesitancy to ask for help compared to middle-class counterparts (Lareau 2015) difficulty grasping faculty expectations compared to middle-class counterparts (Collier and Morgan 2007) and interpreting shortcomings as a character flaw rather than structural disadvantage (Mallman 2017).

Recently, class-based disadvantages in higher education, and academe more generally, has received increased focus. For instance, the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research recently expanded their mandate include social class background, in addition to their previously established focus on gender and ethnic diversity[5]. Moreover, an opinion column on the topic of first-generation student's specifically,[6] claimed this group to be "invisible but disadvantaged." Following this it has been more common to read and hear about the case of first-generation students' experiences (in the Norwegian translation: 'førstegenerasjonsstudenter') in the larger debate on diversity and inclusivity in academe.[7] The topic on being the first to pursue higher education is however not new, while the adaptation of the American term to denote this group is; common denotations for this group has been "students with working class backgrounds" or "undertakers of a class journey.[8]" Considering this, my study on the subjective experiences of first-generation students is contributing toward the larger societal problematization of diversity and social class in academe. Based on the open narrative interviews I conducted with nine participants of a relative profile, I answered the three research questions outline above. All pertaining to the overarching question of what

[5] https://kifinfo.no/nb/content/komiteens-mandat

[6] Opinion column in the academe-oriented newspaper, *Khrono*, by professor at UiO, Jonas Kunst, in October 2021: https://khrono.no/forstegenerasjons-studenter-er-en-vanskeligstilt-men-usynlig-gruppe/622577

[7] See relevant articles listed under "news- and media articles at the end of the reference section"

[8] Examples: Article on "working-class boy" turned Norways' youngest professor: https://www.forskerforum.no/i-en-klasse-for-seg/ and philosophy student with a self-declared "working-class background" problematizing the class differences at campus Blindern: https://universitas.no/sak/66787/klassedelte-seminarrom/

characterizes the experiences of first-generation students in the humanities at Norway's oldest and most prestigious university.

Thesis structure

In the subsequent chapter I outline the Bourdieusian theoretical framework I have applied. I demonstrate how the interrelationship between habitus and field, can be applied to apprehend the first-generation students' experiences as newcomers to the academic field. Moreover, I write about how a psychosocial reading – with attention to the interrelationship between social, classed, structures and agents' thoughts, emotions and actions – allows for an understanding of how field transgressions produce affective experiences in individuals. Following that, I cover the methodical basis and decisions the empirical foundation of this qualitative interview study rests on. In addition to demonstrating interview procedure, analytical approach and ethical considerations, I also discuss the potential of my interview method "to grasp" the preconscious nature of habitus.

My analysis is organized into three different chapters that builds on each other. The *first* is centred around the first-generation students' motivations to pursue higher education, initial experiences as newcomers to the academic field and the tensions in habitus which is made apparent. In the *second* analysis chapter, I am interested in a variation in the sample regarding future aspirations: one group of students orients themselves toward work in academe and the other group toward work outside of academe. I explore the social dynamics that appears connected to either orientation. In the *third* analysis chapter, I address how being a newcomer to the field is reflected in the first-generation students' identities and identity work. Lastly, I complete this thesis with concluding remarks and a discussion on whether the first-generation students' educational journeys can be understood as stories of middle-class in the making.

2. Habitus as a Theoretical Basis

Situations in which 'the socialized body' (Bourdieu 1998: 81) – or *habitus* – encounters a different field than that of which it is the product, make up the theoretical starting point of this thesis. These are the cases in which habitus is though unable to rely on spontaneous, field specific, preconscious, and embodied knowledge to guide action. In the opposite scenario, when habitus and field is made up of the same social and historical fabric, they are "generally attuned to each other" (Bourdieu 1993: 46). The lack of such attunement, fit, or integration which is oftentimes associated with being a *newcomer* to the field and the occupation of an 'awkward social position' (Bourdieu 2000: 163). Which is also thought to hold the potential of spurring "a habitus divided against itself" (Bourdieu 1999: 501) – frequently known as *split* habitus (Bourdieu 2007).

It has been argued that it is within the elaborations on split habitus that an affective, emotional, touch is most visible in Bourdieu's work (Reay 2015). This has to do with how the lack of integration this notion is intended to capture, implies "ambivalences, compromise, competing loyalties, ambiguity and conflict" (Reay 2015: 11). In this analysis I apply a psychosocial frame to apprehend the varying forms of tensions, conflict and changes in habitus, which allows for a greater understanding of how "the exterior – wider social structures – is experienced and mediated by the interior, the psyche" (Reay 2015: 9). Put differently: In which ways are tensions, conflicts, and changes in habitus made visible as affective experiences throughout the first-generation students' educational journeys? In what follows, I will first elaborate habitus as an embodiment of the social and the idea of a good fit between habitus and field, before addressing cases in which there is discord in this relationship. Lastly, I will discuss habitus potential for integrating experiences and dispositions linked to different fields, and the possible growth dimension of upward mobility by means of going to university.

Embodying the social

Within the social space it is *habitus* – understood as a "structuring structure" - that guides action (Bourdieu 1990: 52-53).[9] In other words: habitus is central to Bourdieu's theory of action

[9] Within the social space – characterized by a power struggle – class position is determined, or assigned, according to the *volume* and *composition* of different forms of capital; namely, economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. The various forms of capital must be understood as key types of "social powers" (Bourdieu 1987: 4) which can be used to gain access to different social goods or status within a given field. Moreover,

or practice (1990: 1998). Habitus can be understood as an "internalization of the external" (Bourdieu 1990: 55) or also; an embodied reflection of the social world. In this way habitus works as a mediating construct that "helps us revoke the common-sense duality between the individual and the social" (Wacquant 2016: 65). The external, social world, or space, is made up of different *fields* in which habitus operates. Fields, unlike contexts, environments, or milieus, is a notion rooted in a conflictual class perspective and must be understood as "structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital" (Swartz 1997: 119, 123). Applying a sports metaphor, Bourdieu refers to the social dynamic that is played out in each field as 'the game' (1990: 66). It is sociohistorical conditionings within a given field – with its unique 'game' – that is thought to structure habitus. Frequently conceptualized as:

> …systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predispose to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1990: 53).

This conceptualization of habitus – which upfront highlights both its durability and openness to change – mainly focuses on how habitus invokes *pre*conscious action in accordance with the social conditions in which it was structured or formed.

This type of action is often referred to as "strategies" in Bourdieu's work. Yet, these are not "the product of genuine strategic intention – which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies" (Bourdieu 1990: 73). As such, the Bourdieusian notion of strategy I apply in this analysis "does not refer to the purposive and calculated pursuit of goals as [in the case of] rational actor theories" (Swartz 1997: 67). Rather, strategies in this regard rests on habitus "infinite capacity" for generating responses to varying demands in accordance with the sociohistorical limitations of a field (Bourdieu 1990: 55). Thus, Bourdieu writes that

> …the conditioned and conditional freedom [habitus] provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning (1990: 55).

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trajectory influences the achievement of one's class position in the social space. This operates in the way that there is a host of "more or less equally probable trajectories" associated with a specific combination of volume and composition of capital – what Bourdieu calls "the modal trajectory" of a given group (1984: 110).

By emphasizing how habitus yields creative, yet socially conditioned, responses in different settings, Bourdieu distances his action-generating principle from rote determinism. Instead, the relation between unique individual expression and the conditioning structures can be likened to that of grammatical proficiency in a given language; which allows speakers to "produce proper speech acts unthinkingly according to shared rules in inventive yet predictable ways" (Wacquant 2016: 66).

The *embodied* nature of habitus is another key facet, that is less emphasized in the above definition of habitus as a 'structuring structure.' This relates to how habitus, as mentioned in chapter opening, may be thought of as 'a socialized body' – namely:

> A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world (Bourdieu 1998: 81).

When the structures of a given field is deposited inside an individual's body, they become attuned to the social conditions of which they are the product. In a metaphorical sense, the embodied nature of habitus can be thought of as a 'feel for the game' – to have the game "under the skin" (Bourdieu 1998: 80). In this way habitus influences the way individuals perceive, make sense of, and engage the world around them. In more concrete terms, habitus can be understood as "a complex internalized core, from which everyday experiences emanate" (Reay 2004: 435). As a construct mediating between the everyday experiences of the individual and the social; the subjective and the objective, habitus "is a means of viewing structure as occurring within small-scale interactions and activity within large-scale settings" (Reay 2004: 439). Then, habitus provides a way to grasp how the first-generation students have internalized larger social structures and how their embodied ways of relating to the world guide their *experiences* in the academic field.

Within Bourdieu's own work the conceptualizations of habitus vary over time "moving from rigid to flexible notions" (Silvia 2016: 167). One example of more "rigid" notion of habitus is found in *Practical Reason* (1998) where Bourdieu conceptualizes it as a

> …generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices or persons, goods [and] practices (Bourdieu 1998: 8).

The way habitus works to ensure unity between dispositions and conditions is what is emphasized in this conceptualization. This is also related to how Bourdieu argued that habitus tends to "perpetuate structures corresponding to their conditions of production" (2000: 160) –

meaning that in most cases habitus works to align an agent with the demands and goals of its primary field. An example of a more flexible notion of habitus, however, is found in the later work of *Pascalian Meditations* (2000). Here Bourdieu stresses that habitus is "not necessarily adapted to its situations nor necessarily coherent" (2000:160). Moreover, habitus' constant change in response to new experiences is conceived of in the following way:

> Dispositions are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, because it works on the basis of the premises established in the previous state. They are characterized by a combination of constancy and variation which varies according to the individual and his degree of flexibility or rigidity (2000: 161).

Although it can be seen here how the notion of habitus is open to much change, this ought to be understood as "revisions" of the initial habitus, and thus never "radical" transformation. Moreover, it is worth noting how there is also an *individual component* here, along the lines of "openness to new experience" that will influence changes in habitus. Overall, it is these more flexible notions of habitus which is most compatible with the present project – and that also opens for the idea that disruptions in the form of tension, conflict and change could occur in habitus (Bourdieu 1999; 2000; 2007). In the analysis that follows I conceptualize tension in habitus as the first-generation student's sense of *fit* and *misfit* both in the academic field and in their field of origin – or *home environment* as I refer to it. Split habitus is conceptualized as a *conflict* in which old and new aspects of self needs to answer to 'competing loyalties.' By *change* I refer to *revisions* in habitus due to the influence of impulses from the new academic field.

A psychosocial approach

I employ a *psychosocial* analytical lens aimed at grasping the interrelationship between structure and agency in this project. More specifically I am paying attention to how the interrelationship between habitus and field is played out in the psyche of an individual. This is an approach inspired by Diane Reay's work on how the affective dimensions of class inequality factor into the lived experiences, and therefore, the making of class (2005: 2015). In talking about the psychosocial dynamics of class, I am referring to "the complex, difficult and nuanced ways in which class thinking, feeling and practices both generate and are generated in and through each other" (Reay 2005: 914). The idea that "class is always lived on both a conscious and unconscious level" (Reay 2005: 912) is central in this psychosocial approach – which also make up a good fit with the notion of habitus. This is also the topic of Reay's article from 2015

in which she elaborated on "the potential of habitus to develop a holistic understanding of the lived, embodied, affective experiences of inequalities in contemporary society" (10). This approach rests on the idea that habitus' encounter with different fields produce affective responses in individuals. Therefore, Reay suggests that the inclusion of "psychic responses and the emotional underworld of individuals both extends and enriches the concept of habitus" (2015: 22). In my analysis I have paid special attention to the first-generation students' expressions of positive, negative, and more neutral affects regarding the interview topics we covered. It was these emotional experiences that guided my analysis in identifying tensions, conflict and changes in habitus.

However, in line with Reay (2015), I am not proposing that certain emotions or psychic states are embedded within an individual or class habitus. Rather, encounters between habitus and field – and the emotional "transactions" or exchanges these produce - "becomes sedimented in certain habitus" (Reay 2015: 12). According to Reay, the emotional exchanges that occurs in the encounter between habitus and field *could* produce affective states in the following way:

> ...for example, the learning that comes through inhabiting pathologized spaces within the field often results in a predilection for shame, fear, anxiety or even righteous indignation, while the internalization of social inequalities in the privileged can result in dispositions of superiority, entitlement, disdain, but also a predilection for guilt, ambivalence and discomfort (Reay 2015: 12).

Again, this example is not meant to claim that the occupation of certain position in a classed society inflict specific emotional states. Rather, it is meant to illustrate how habitus embodies an affective dimension that influence how it is to be in different fields. It is particularly the psychosocial dimension habitus is apt to capture, which is of interest in my project. Reay argues that such an understanding of habitus allows us

> …to expand our understanding of how the past is played out in the present for individuals, but also to get a better grasp of the degree of ease and/or discomfort with which people respond to and internalise the wider social world, as they move across a range of familiar and unfamiliar fields (Reay 2015: 22).

Where Reay talks about habitus "degree of ease and/or discomfort" in different fields, I use the notions of *fit* and *misfit* in the analysis that follows. Reflecting the biographical and sociohistorical aspect of habitus, attention to "how the past is played out in the present" (Reay 2015) is key to shed light on the first-generation students' experiences of fit and misfit in the fields they move in. It is the precedence of the *primary* habitus that undergirds the focus on

how 'the past' influences the present: the early experiences of an individual "produce the structure of habitus" which, in turn, serves as "the basis of appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (Bourdieu 1977: 78). Following Reay, then, I employ a broad understanding of habitus that includes both affective, emotional, and cognitive aspects as well as different dispositional cultural preferences and forms of conduct. In this way, I seek to grasp the ways in which the first-generation students' dispositions and internalized habitual core operates in the academic field and the potential experiences of fit and misfit.

In this section I have demonstrated how habitus can be understood as a preconscious, internal basis, that guides individuals' actions and experiences within and across different fields. The sociohistorical conditions of a field are thought to structure habitus and ensure a certain durability of dispositions. At the same time, habitus is thought to be flexible and open to change in the event of influences from new fields. The social structuring of habitus is reflective of individuals actions' – understood as non-strategic strategies. Lastly, I argued, in line with Reay (2005:2015), that attention to the psychosocial – how the social is played out in the emotional world of an individual – provides important cues as to how habitus experiences to move about in different fields.

Like a fish in the water?

As a building block to understand the notion of *split habitus* it is key to understand that the attunement, or fit, between habitus and field is thought to be a catalyst for *positive* affective states (Bourdieu 200). In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000) Bourdieu claims that there is a link between "happiness" and the extent to which a field enables an individual's habitus "to come into its own" (150). I will not go into details about Bourdieu's understanding of happiness, but the idea of a habitus that is 'coming into its own' – or that in a sense is *home* – is linked to instances in which an individual, or class of people, is faced with a field of which they, and their habitus, is "the product" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). Famously, Bourdieu suggested that in the cases where there is such a match between an individual's dispositions and the social conditions habitus

> is like a 'fish in the water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127).

It is the relative social *neutrality* characterized by "not feeling the weight of the water" which is the main emphasis in Bourdieu's fish-in-the-water analogy. This showcases how, when habitus is in an element of which it is the product, it is characterized by a sense of effortlessness, or *ease* (Bourdieu 2000) which is another Bourdieusian notion I draw upon in the subsequent analysis.

The relative ease of an individual can be understood as the "degree to which one can abandon oneself to the automatisms of practical sense" that characterizes the social logic of various fields (Bourdieu 2000: 163). In line with the *relational* mode of thinking that characterized Bourdieu's work, the notion of ease is brought to the forefront by elaborations of the *dis*ease thought to follow from lack of attunement between habitus and field:

> it is likely that those who are 'in their right place' in the social world can abandon and entrust themselves more, and more completely, to their dispositions (this is the 'ease' of the well-born) than those who occupy awkward positions, such as the *parvenus* and the *déclassés*; and the latter are more likely to bring to consciousness that which, for others, is taken for granted, because they are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the 'first movements' of a habitus that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviors" (Bourdieu 2000: 163).

Here, Bourdieu suggests that when habitus is 'out of field' it and cannot rely on an embodied understanding of social logic. As such the preconscious elements of habitus can be brought into the conscious for *newcomers to the field* – those who are undertaking a social *transgression.* This leads to a situation in which individuals can become *hyperaware* of the social logics which is 'taken for granted' when there is match between dispositions and conditions. In my understanding, such hyperawareness can be considered the opposite of having an embodied 'feel for the game.' Based on how the participants in my study are the *first* in their families to go to university it makes sense to think of them as newcomers to the academic field. While acknowledging their newcomer status, and its potential for various forms of disease, it is key to not make any presumptions on how this "awkward" position is experienced (Friedman 2014). Until now, I have focused many on the workings of habitus and the how the interrelationship between habitus and field holds the potential to evoke feelings of fit and misfit in individuals. Another dimension that is key to understand the experiences of newcomers to the field, is why a new field is deemed worthy of attention in the first place.

Bourdieu argued that habitus influence whether 'the game' of a field is considered "meaningful" or not (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). This means that habitus influences whether an individual sees the stakes of the game as worthwhile and sensible, and like something "it is worth investing one's energy in" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). This drive toward emotional investment in the game is referred to as *illusio* or *interest:* in fleshing out what is meant by this, Bourdieu writes in *Practical Reason* (1998) that:

> *Illusio* is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is 'worth the candle,' or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort. […] That is, the fact that what happens matter to those who are engaged in it, who are the game. […] It is to recognize the game and to recognize its stakes (Bourdieu 1998: 77).

The way habitus and field maintain a relationship of "mutual attraction" is key in the notion of illusio, which is

> …determined from the inside, from impulses that push toward a self-investment in objects; but is also determined from the outside, starting with a particular universe of objects offered socially for investment (Bourdieu 1999: 512).

The concept of illusio is useful to shed light on why newcomers find it meaningful and worthwhile to invest energy in the academic field. It also holds the potential to illuminate what is at stake. Moreover, considering how the basis of split habitus is considered a situation in which an individual is drawn between 'competing loyalties' illusio can bring into relief what 'loyalties' habitus is invested in.

The interrelationship between habitus and field is also thought to affect *aspirations.* Bourdieu spoke about 'the field of the possibles' (1984: 110) to denote how what is seen as a possible, attainable, future is part of the fields social conditioning on habitus. Another way to talk about how attainable aspirations is part of the embodied fabric of habitus was that individuals perceive certain futures to be *for* and *not* for 'the likes of us' (Bourdieu 1990: 56). In this way individuals are, for the most part, thought to "shape their aspirations according to the concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible" (Bourdieu 1990: 64). Bourdieu's assertion that sociohistorical factors disposed in habitus guides aspirations "and the degree to which they are satisfied" is also framed as a critique on educational discourses isolating notions of "'hopes', 'aspirations', motivations', and 'will-power'" from the social conditions of which habitus is the product (1990 [1977]: 207). This must be understood as an effort to shift away from framing aspirations and the achievement there of as having to do with individual efforts. Rather, Bourdieu places emphasis on how the social – of which habitus is an embodiment of – shape

what an individual sees as possible. Regarding how the social influence aspirations and the likelihood of attaining them, there is, however, key differences between the French context – set in the 1950s onward – of which Bourdieu based is empirical educational studies, and the Norwegian setting that makes up the context of the first-generation students in the present study. Particularly noteworthy is how the free tuition or Norwegian universities and the availability of student loans and stipends, challenges the connection between aspirations and objective social limitations.

Another critique of the emphasis on the primary habitus' relation to social aspirations, and thus reproduction, is "that Bourdieu's model has no space for coherently understanding intra-class variations" (Atkinson 2012: 739). This point gets at the "hidden advantages and familial particularities" that could reside in working-class families:

> …[such as] someone in the family with slightly more cultural capital, perhaps even someone who had been through higher education themselves, contact with dissimilar others fostering a slightly different perception and so on (Atkinson 2012: 739).

Similarly, Mallman makes a call for social mobility scholars to recognize how:

> …working-class families are not nearly as homogenous as suspected and should not be presumed to be without the characteristics that have symbolic currency in the dominant classes (Mallman 2018: 26).

These are some of the nuances difficult to pick up on in big-picture, quantitative studies, but that will be important to pay attention to in qualitative case studies such as this. Moreover, the idea of intra-class variations that, for example, could influence social mobility, also gets at how "[h]abituses are permeable and responsive to what is going on around them" (Reay 2004: 434). Considering this, attention to shifts in aspirations is also worth noting in apprehending the first-generation students' experiences as newcomers to the field.

In this section I have further elaborated on the different aspects of life the interrelationship between habitus and field is thought to affect. Firstly, I established how Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) employed the metaphor of fish-in-the water to illustrate the *effortlessness* – understood as social *neutrality* – characteristic of strong attunement between habitus and field. The "awkward" social positioning of newcomers to the field (Bourdieu 2000) is the relational opposite to being a fish in the water. This can spur newcomers to become *hyperaware* of social logics which is 'taken for granted' by a habitus in its "right" element (Bourdieu 2000). Secondly, I demonstrated how the attunement between habitus and field contributes to making

'the game' meaningful and worthwhile to invest energy in (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Lastly, I demonstrated how Bourdieu (1984) apprehended the aspirations to be part of the social conditioning that produce habitus: in the form of what is seen as possible and desirable for 'the likes of us.' With the fish in the water analogy as a central backdrop, and how the interrelationship between habitus and field is linked to what is deemed meaningful and possible, I will elaborate on Bourdieu's thinking around how the awkward position of newcomers to the field could produce a *split habitus.*

A split sense of self?

Bourdieu was clear about how the relationship between an individuals' habitus and social logic of a field is "never perfect" and that "there are always some agents 'out on a limb', displaced, out of place and ill at ease" (Bourdieu 2000: 157). In fact, the notion of habitus was initially applied by Bourdieu to understand the 'mismatches' between dispositions and social structures (2000: 159).[10] Upward mobility through education, in the form of going from the working-classes to the middle-classes, is an example of field transgression, and associated mismatch, devised by Bourdieu (1999: 511; 2000: 157) The basic idea behind these kinds of mismatches is that the "effects of the primary conditioning" continues to persist even after an encounter with a new field where different 'rules of the game' apply (Bourdieu 1990: 62). In such cases where habitus is exposed to a new field, Bourdieu argued that a *split* habitus (org: *habitus clivé*) could occur (1999; 2007).

In the *Weight of the World* (1999) Bourdieu elaborates on the notion of split habitus. Here he draws upon the example of social mobility to explain how he envisions the implications of field transgressions:

> [It] tends to produce a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities (Bourdieu 1999: 511).

[10] In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000) Bourdieu writes that habitus "originally forced itself upon [him] to understand the *mismatches*" that occurred for agents with a habitus formed in a precapitalist world in the Algerian economy in the 1960s.

The central underpinning of split habitus is the 'double perception of self' spurred by the dual, or multiple, field exposure. A sense of ambivalence and negotiation over one's identity could be produced by this split sense of self. Negotiation between new and old interests – or 'competing loyalties' – is also highlighted in this conceptualization of split habitus. Moreover, part of the key to understand split habitus lies in the earlier elaboration of fit between habitus and field. As mentioned, habitus "tends to produce 'reasonable,' 'common-sense' behaviors" in cases where there is a strong fit between dispositions and conditions (Bourdieu 1990: 55). It follows, then, that a central feature of split habitus is the impaired ability to spontaneously produce 'reasonable' behaviors, or 'strategies.'

A further elaboration of the workings of split habitus is found in *A Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (2007) – also known as Bourdieu's "non-autobiography." Here Bourdieu writes about his own experiences with split habitus, which he attributes to having "high academic consecration and low social origins" (2007: 100). Again, he stresses how field transgression could surface in an individual as a feeling of internal "tension and contradiction" (Bourdieu 2007: 100). Overall, this experience of being out of sync with the social logic of a field, is connected to complex states of mind. And the internal tug undergirding the notion of split habitus is depicted here in stark contrast to the ease associated with the 'fish in the water'-analogy (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As mentioned earlier, Reay (2015) has argued that it is when Bourdieu applies the notion of split habitus to understand his own upward mobility journey that the psychosocial and affective is most apparent in his body of work. She writes:

> Despite Bourdieu's antipathy towards autobiography, he writes particularly powerfully about his own ambivalences at being in an unfamiliar field[11], and it is in relation to his own social trajectory that he outlines most clearly powerful emotions, conflicts and unresolved tension within habitus (Reay 2015: 11)

This has to do with the elaborations on how split habitus, as demonstrated above, is thought to produce an internal conflict – hinged on a 'double perception of self' – that is characterized by tension, contradiction, and ambivalence. "Powerful emotions" is therefore implicit in this notion according to Reay (2015: 11). In her work on the psychosocial application of a Bourdieusian framework she develops conceptions of these kinds of complex states of mind, namely, the "frequently overlooked anxieties, conflicts, desires, defenses, ambivalences and tensions within classed identities" (10). By default, newcomers to the academic field, such as the first-generation students in this study, can be said to occupy what Bourdieu termed an

[11] In *A Sketch for Self-Analysis* (Bourdieu 2007).

'awkward' social position: how this "objective" mismatch is *experienced* subjectively, however, is a different matter.

Attention to individual variation is important in applying the framework of fit and misfit, and particularly split habitus to shed light on the first-generation students' educational journeys. In a recent article Mallman (2018) posed a duly question: "When in a person's life does social mobility begin?" (25). Here Mallman (2018) challenges the idea that "a person's experience of a divided habitus originates in secondary fields such as education and work" (27) – as he suggests Bourdieu implies in his writings. Put differently, he is critical of depicting the beginning of a class journey as the moment a first-generation student enters university. Rather, Mallman suggests that "early family life is the context in which social mobility and the resulting [split habitus] often begins" (2018: 27). One of the narratives Mallman found to be connected to early onset split habitus was stories centered around "divergence from their family's immobility" (2018: 31). In essence these are stories of "escaping" perceived structural limitations associated with the home environment. Mallman (2018) suggests that this type of "determination to do differently, and to be different" could result in tensions spurred by "complex negotiation of risk and insecurity" (2018: 31, see also Lehmann 2009: 635). Put differently: navigating the uncertainty of reaping returns on educational investments as a newcomer alongside the insecurity that could be produced by split habitus.

Degree of fit or misfit between habitus and field is also thought to depend upon the *direction* of transgression and *extent of discrepancy*. As mentioned in the introduction, the first-generation students social background and their orientation towards the humanities – which is a part of the upper cultural fraction of the social space – indicates a mobility journey that is transverse, or diagonal, in its nature (Bourdieu 1984: 131). As the rules of the game within the cultural fractions is thought to be more elusive than in the economic fields, there could be an added sense of distance to the dispositional traits – which in turn could affect the experience of being a newcomer to the field and the potential manifestation of tension, conflict – in the form of split – and changes in habitus. With regards to degree of attunement, it has been specified that habitus could be the product – not solely of a singular field – but of "a set of intersecting fields" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). Elaborating on this, Bourdieu emphasize that it is the "*extent* of their intersection or discrepancy" that is "at the root of a divided or even torn habitus" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127 emphases added). As such, we can picture habitus and field as a Venn diagram, where the intersection and discrepancy

between the two notions will vary – especially according to earlier experiences inscribed in the primary habitus. This means that split habitus might look quite different from individual to individual. Moreover, it makes sense to think that it can surface in different forms and "intensities."

In this section I have outlined Bourdieu's concept for apprehending mismatches between habitus and field, namely *split habitus.* The central characteristic of this notion is a 'double perception of self' (Bourdieu 1999) and an interest conflict in the form of negotiation between the 'competing loyalties' of the new and the old field (Bourdieu 1999; 2007). According to Reay (2015) 'powerful emotions' is implicit in the conflictual state of split habitus. Where Bourdieu seems to presuppose that the workings of split habitus is set in motion upon a newcomers' formal *entrance* to a new field – such as first-generation students *starting* university – Mallman (2018) has argued that split habitus could have an *early* onset. Other factors that nuance the concept of split habitus is the *direction* of field transgression and the extent of discrepancy or intersection between habitus and field (Bourdieu 1984). Regarding the latter aspect, it is likely to occur much individual variation.

Beyond split habitus

Recent qualitative studies have supported the idea that social mobility could lead to a split habitus characterized by tension, conflict and competing loyalties experienced as negative and ambivalent affective (see for example Friedman 2016; Lehmann 2013; and Mallman 2017). However, studies have also demonstrated how individuals find strategies to work around the potential negative effects of mismatch between habitus and field (Ingram and Abrahams 2013; Lehmann 2009; Reay et al 2009). In this way, agents are not seen merely as passive victims of split habitus, but rather as actively engaged with finding ways to handle potential tensions and ambivalences. An example of this is found in an article addressing working-class students' experiences in an elite university in Britain, where Reay and colleagues (2009) found that the students:

> …displayed the ability to successfully move across two very different fields, combining strong connections and loyalties to family and home friends with what are seen to be classically middle-class academic dispositions, a versatility that most had begun to develop in early schooling (Reay et al. 2009: 1105).

The ability to maintain loyalties across fields – which must be considered a strategy to mitigate split habitus – is understood as a form of "flexible or reflexive habitus" (Reay et al. 2009: 1116; see also Abrahams and Ingram 2013). This ability to encompass aspects of different fields, particularly family connections, contrasts to Kaufmanns (2003) argument that *associational distancing* whereby individuals "disassociate themselves from individuals who share their ascribed social-class orientations" is key for "successful social transformation" (491). In either case, the agentic dimension in which newcomers to a field *actively* negotiates their newcomer experiences is stressed.

Studies have shown how upwardly mobile report or demonstrate an early inclination towards middle-class dispositions (Mallman 2017; Reay et al 2009). In the study of first-generation students in a British elite environment by Reay and colleagues (2009) they demonstrated that participants had begun to develop academic dispositions and flexibility in habitus – as to encompass impulses and relations across fields – from an early age. Subsequently, they argued that the students felt more of a fit in the academic field than in their home environment – as such they referred to the students as *familiar strangers* that "fit in as learners despite their class difference" (Reay et al 2009: 1115). In this way the fish-in-water metaphor introduced earlier is *flipped:* seeing that the students experiences were interpreted to be that of a "'fish *out* of water'"-feeling when "surrounded by 'people like them'" (Reay et al: 1115, emphasis added). Such findings problematize the idea that habitus tends toward fitting in in the field of which it was the product, and of experiencing misfit in new fields. Reay and colleagues explained this social complexity and anomaly by drawing attention to the first-generation students "educational socialization," in tandem with "work on an of the self" (2009: 1105).

As pointed out earlier, Friedman (2014) cautiones against viewing social mobility as inherently disassociating and calls for more research accounting for *positive* as well as negative effects of the field transgression associated with social mobility. Considering the possible positive effects, the way exposure to new fields contribute to growth and a world that "opens up" has been addressed in several studies (Curl et al. 2018; Lehmann 2013; Mallman 2018; Reay et al. 2009). In summing up his findings Lehmann (2013) does for example report how the first-generation students in his sample

> …spoke about gaining new knowledge, … about growing personally, changing their outlook on life, growing their cultural capital, and developing new dispositions and tastes about a range of issues, from food to politics and their future careers (2013: 1).

Curl et al. presents similar findings and introduces the term "*horizons*" which "encompass one's degree of openness to new experiences, ideas and ways of seeing the world" (2018: 884). However, it could be said that broadening the minds of students is one of the key manifest functions of higher education, and something most students will experience and appreciate, regardless of social background. So, what is unique about the socially mobiles' experiences of discovering new horizons? Part of the answer might lie in how the growth dimension of transgression into the academic field is oftentimes depicted in *contrast* to various forms of limitations in the home environments (Curl et al. 2018; Lehmann 2013). Both Lehmann (2013) and Curl with colleagues (2018) interprets the abovementioned expansion of one's world view as a being based in *change* in habitus, and both points to how these alterations – which for the most part is welcomed by the socially mobile – also could lead to tension and conflict with people in the home environment (see also Mallman 2018). In this way, the positive effect of social mobility is described to "come at some cost" (Lehmann 2013: 9) – and could thus be the root of ambivalence. Or as Mallman (2018) described the bottom line of being a newcomer, and one that left: "These are the people who simultaneously win and lose…" (25).

In this section I have elaborated on how newcomers field transgression has demonstrated experienced that go beyond the negative and conflictual state frequently associated with split habitus (Curl et al. 2009; Lehmann 2013). I highlighted how newcomers to a field have been found to actively negotiate their experiences and also integrate values, relations and cultural traits associated with two different fields (Abrahams and Ingram 2013; Lehmann 2013; Reay et al. 2009). Moreover, I discussed how newcomers have been found to feel more belonging in their new field, than in their field of origin – which contradicts the importance placed on primary habitus (Reay et al. 2009). Lastly, I went over how field transgression is thought to open up a new 'horizon' and lead to various forms of personal growth (Curl et al. 2018; Lehmann 2013).

Summary

As the participants in my study come from vocationally oriented, working-class environments – as the first in their families going to university, I consider them newcomers in the academic field. In this chapter I have discussed how the Bourdieusian notion of habitus and its relationship to field is suited to apprehend tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus spurred

by the field transgression characteristic of newcomers. Habitus embodiment of the social structures of which it is the product, in the form of being a 'socialized body' (Bourdieu 1998: 81), makes it particularly suited to understand how the past is played out in the present for the first-generation students. To apprehend potential conflicts in the form of 'competing loyalties' between the first-generation students new and old aspects of self, I deemed the notion of *split habitus* particularly useful (Bourdieu 1999; 2007). As "powerful emotions" is thought to be implicit in the notion of split habitus, and field transgression more generally, I draw upon Reay's psychosocial adaptation of the interrelationship between habitus and field (2005; 2015). This allowed for a greater understanding of how the first-generation students experiences as newcomers manifested itself in the form of various emotional expressions concerning of fit and misfit.

3: Methods: Narrative qualitative interviews

The central motivation behind the study was to learn about what characterize the *experiences* of humanities students who are the first in their families going to university. Therefore, this project is qualitative in its nature. Narrative interviews with nine first-generation students pursuing master's degrees in the humanities at the University of Oslo make up the empirical basis of my project. In what follows I write about how my interview method was inspired by Holloway and Jeffersons' (2013) approach to narrative interviews with few open questions. Moreover, I discuss the potential of open narrative interviews to grasp the preconscious nature of habitus. Lastly, I describe the interview process, relevant ethical considerations, and my analytical approach.

Grasping habitus

My interview method was partially theoretically informed. In the literature review stage, I deemed the Bourdieusian notion of habitus fruitful to guide my study on the participants experiences of going to university as the first in their families – which could be said to imply a field transgression. I understand habitus as an 'internalized core' (Reay 2005) and embodied reflection of the social that is made visible in individuals' life through attitudes, aspirations, values, preferences and ways of thinking and feeling. Considering the elusiveness of habitus and its preconscious – embodied – nature, it can be "difficult to measure" (Burke 2011: 4) or "to capture" (Costa et al 2019). Moreover, a central feature of habitus is its sociohistorical basis (Bourdieu 1998) – attention to how the past is played out in the present is therefore key in studying this elusive notion (Burke 2011). In the process of deciding on an interview method fit for the aims of this project, I looked toward previous qualitative studies of habitus and followed their use of narrative interview method (see for example Curl et al. 2018; Friedman 2016; Mallman 2017, 2018; Reay 2004). Narrative interviews centred on tracing autobiographical stories along a more or less set timeline offers a way to grasp the historical elements of habitus and how these surfaces in lived life (Costa et al 2019; Reay 2004). Moreover, the autobiographical frame of narrative interviews provides an opportunity to trace habitus durability and potential changes in the event of influences from a new field.

Specifically, I drew upon Holloway and Jeffersons' (2013) approach to narrative interviews. Which was developed with the psychosocial in mind – understood as attentiveness to the interplay between the individual experience and the social structure. This focus resonates with the way habitus "seeks to mediate relations between structure and agency" (Silvia 2016: 167; see also Wacquant 2016). A central feature of Holloway and Jeffersons approach (2013) is to "anchor peoples' accounts to events that have taken place" (32). This pairs well with how it has also been pointed out that narrative interviews – centred around specific life events - "helps bring the weight of particularity to the study of habitus (2018: 28). Moreover, by tracing associations to open ended questions Holloway and Jeffersons interview method is developed to get hold of the "complexities of unique lives in all their confusions, ambivalences and contradictions" (2013: 4). This makes it particularly suited to attain the level of nuance needed to grasp the complexities of habitus through qualitative interviews. Attentiveness to ambivalences and contradictions in the interviewees' narratives makes it a good fit for the study of changes and tensions in habitus in light of its encounter with different fields.

Open narrative interviews

As mentioned above, the narrative interview approach I used was inspired by Holloway and Jefferson (2013). This is an open interview approach where the "agenda is open to development and change, depending on the narrator's experience" (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 6; see also Fog 2014: 19). In praxis this meant that I paid close attention to the themes, or "associations" the first-generation students themselves brought up as the interview progresses and allowed time to explore these before returning to the interview schedule. In deciding what to follow up, I looked for points in their narration with obvious signs of hesitations, defensiveness, ambivalence or signs of excitement, motivation, and interest. Moreover, I tried to be attentive to themes that were repeated several times – understanding this to be points of special importance to the participants. In this process I also made sure to use the "respondent's own words and phrases" to "respect and retain the interviewees meaning-frames" (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 33). The thinking behind this approach is to shift away from the "conscious logic" an interview guide is organized in accordance to be able to "follow pathways defined by emotional motivation" (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 34). Eliciting these emotional motivations was important for this study in order to be able to analyze first-generation students' affective investments or discord with the different fields they move in and through. Furthermore, these affective investments, which become evident in the way the participants

order their narratives, also aid in gaining "access to a person's concerns" (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 34). Such concerns could take the shape of motivations, interests, worries, insecurities, and the like, which the students associated with the different themes raised during the interviews.

I developed an interview schedule in accordance with the key themes that emerged during the initial literature review phase (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 34-35; see also Fog 2004: 19-20, 53). These themes can be organized into three domains: 1) life at university, 2) life in the home environment) and 3) reflections about the future. As part of the preparatory stages, I developed a short interview guide that targeted these broad topics (see appendix 3 for further details). In keeping with the aim of eliciting narratives that were founded in concrete experiences, I organized the interviews to get an overview of the first-generation students' time in higher education. This fits with how autobiographical stories are a central feature of narrative interviews – and key to grasp habitus. As such the central junctions in the first-generation student's educational journey – going from high school to bachelor level studies – from bachelor- to master level studies – and their aspirations, wants and plans post-graduation – anchored the interviews. While I covered all these educational junctions and what the first-generation students did in between; interviewing in this way meant that the transcripts turned out quite differently in terms of structure and order of narration; seeing that the "concerns" and associational pathways of the individual students varied.

I initiated the interviews by 'asking a single question' (Holloway and Jefferson 2013), with the aim of seeing what type of associations this produced participants. During the first five interviews the opening question asked students to describe their experiences starting university – suggesting they could start describing their first few days or how the first week was. However, I noticed that one of the associations that frequently came up was their high school experience of the critical juncture when they had to decide on what to do after graduating high school. Therefore, I revised my interview schedule and let the revised opening question focus on describing the process of deciding what to do after high school and how they ended up in their specific bachelor's degree programs. And then returning to the question of their first day at university as to be able to get comparable data in the interviews.

Socially constructed knowledge

My data collection process rests on the premise that "the process of knowing through conversation is intersubjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as co-

constructors of knowledge" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 18; see also Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 41). An important facet of the researcher's job as a collaborative part in the construction of knowledge is to listen attentively. In line with Fog (2004) I viewed "the conversation" to be at the foundation of my interviews. By this I mean that I considered the listening and "presence and attentiveness" characteristic of any good conversational partner (Fog 2004) a central interview "tool." To stay as present as possible I memorized the short interview guide in advance – following Fogs' (2004) and only briefly glanced at my interview notes. Elaborating on this point, Fog writes that being overly concerned with an interview guide could lead to the loss of "contact" between interviewer and interviewee (2004: 46); this, she upholds, not only interferes with the interview flow, but could also lead to the production of lower-quality data. By freeing myself from the interview guide I could "listen carefully to what the person [was] saying and to let this be the guide for what to follow up with" (2004: 45, own translation). As a natural consequence of the flow of the interview, most of the participants spontaneously brought up the three overarching themes: student life at university, relationship to home environment, and reflections on future aspirations. However, as mentioned in the above section, the points in time the students, for example, made spontaneous comparisons between university and home, or between themselves and other students, varied according to their associations to the different questions. This was part of the social construction of knowledge. The timing of when different themes were brought up, and the length of time each participant devoted to the different topics was also a consequence of the co-creating nature of the interview flow. While this could affect the potential to compare between interviews, I consider it a strength that the investment of time and emotional energy on the different topics pointed me towards understanding what was important, or at stake, for the different first-generation students.

The way the researcher "sees with the eyes she has" (Fog 2004: 54) is another important facet of how the data produced in qualitative interviews is constructed socially. This means that the researcher brings the whole of herself and her previous experiences – "both practical and theoretical" – into the interview conversation, which, in turn, affects what she notices and how she perceives the meaning of what is said (Fog 2004: 54, own translation). Similarly, Holloway and Jefferson contend that "biographical similarities" factor into what the researcher "notice" during an interview situation, which in turn affects analysis (2013: 60). Moreover, Fog stresses that the researcher's ability to "lean away from the interview guide" - and thus, to stay more present – rests on the extent to her knowledge about "the conditions and concerns of the group

she is interviewing" (Fog 2004: 60, own translation). As a masters' student myself, my understanding of what it means to be at university aided in the contextualization of the students' experiences. Moreover, I am familiar with non-academic environments and peripheral/rural environments, which also aided in the contextualization of the students' stories. However, considering how I shared some biographical factors with the participants, I continually – and especially in the preparatory stages – reflected upon how to cultivate the appropriate analytical distance to the project.[12] While at the same time acknowledging that the totality of my previous knowledge and experiences – both practical and theoretical, as Fog expressed it, all factored into my methodological approach to this project.

Recruitment and sample

No one goes around with a tag in their forehead proclaiming their first-generation student status. Nor is it usual to explicitly self-identify as a "first-generation student" in a Norwegian university context – as is becoming increasingly commonplace across college campuses in the United States (e.g. Wildhagen 2015).[13] Findings also suggest that people either tend to view themselves as part of a wide middleclass (Harrits and Pedersen 2018) or hesitate to "classify" themselves in terms of class altogether (Savage et al. 2001). I light of this, I decided to avoid making any overt reference to social class in the recruiting phase. This decision also aligned with how it was the concrete way the students' life trajectory *differed* from that of their parents – namely, their choice to go to university – that was the key inclusion criteria of this project, and not their potential subjective self-identification with a particular social class. In case the first-generation students connected their experiences to a potential classed identity, I wanted them to volunteer this information during the interviews. However, I deemed it important to be able to make comparisons between the participants' respective social class background – bases on the parameters of the Oslo Register Data Classification Scheme (see Hansen and Ljunggren in *Arbeiderklassen* 2020: 41). Therefore, I included a structured socio-

[12] "Professional distance" (Kvale and Brinkman 2009: 74) was particularly important during the interview situation, thus I never disclosed my shared affiliation as a first-generation student during the interviews. In one instance, however, I deemed it important for rapport building reasons to briefly confirm this part about myself, as one of the students that seemed a bit defensive, directly inquired about my "background" ahead of the interview.

[13] With the resent adaptation of the term 'first-generation students' into the Norwegian language – as mentioned in the introduction – it is possible that this will be subject to change in the times ahead.

demographic section (see appendix 4) at the end of the unstructured part of the interview[14]. By asking the questions, instead of having the participants fill out a questionnaire, I was able to elicit some additional narratives and reflections concerning their social background.[15]

The data collection phase, including recruiting and transcription, took place during the fall of 2020 – with the interviews being conducted in October and November of that year. I phrased the heading for the participation to partake in this study in the following way: "Are you the first one in your family to complete a higher degree?" (see the complete invitation in appendix 1). Following that, I highlighted the two inclusion criteria:

1. Neither of your parents/guardians have completed a bachelor's degree or higher.
2. You must be a full-time student enrolled in a master's program at the faculty of humanities at the University of Oslo.[16]

I shared the invitation to participate on several different platforms, such as relevant Facebook -groups for different humanities programs at UiO, and on a mailing list for philosophy students. Furthermore, I posted flyers on some of the posterboards around the relevant humanities buildings on campus Blindern. I also relied on my extended social network to share the invitation in relevant forums. Initially I was also planning to make use of snowball sampling, but this proved difficult as none of the participants knew of other students with a social profile matching the study's inclusion criterion. This is itself indicative of the social phenomenon under study: As mentioned in the introduction, only 1 out of 5 students in the humanities have a working-class background[17] – possibly even less at the master level; it could also be related to how information about social background is perhaps not as frequently shared among students.

"Full-time student" was set as an inclusion criterion as I wanted to include participants with higher educational studies as their primary activity. This was to ensure that they would have

[14] In keeping with the aim of not introducing "class" as a factor in the interviews unless the participants themselves brought it up, it was key to have the demographics section – which also inquired about subjective class - after completing the unstructured part of the interview.

[15] I did for example ask the participants if they thought their own class background, should they identify with one – differed in comparison to how they perceived the potential class background of their family.

[16] It was a bit challenging to get hold of relevant participants. Thus, I later opened up to also include recent graduates who completed their degree as a full-time humanities student no later than spring of 2017 – it was, however, only one recent graduate that came forward wanting to participate in the study.

[17] Number from 2017 plotted by Marianne Nordli Hansen (Professor in sociology at the University of Oslo).

the option of being engaged with the social aspects of student life. As it proved somewhat challenging to recruit participants, I adjusted the inclusion criterion to include recent alumni graduates. In the final sample, there was, however, only one participant who had recently completed their master's degree. The other eight participants were in their first or second year of various humanities programs.

The final sample consisted of eight masters' students in different humanities programs and one recent graduate from such programs. As stated earlier, there were two common denominators between the participants: 1) all were master's level humanities students at UiO (with the exception of the recent graduate) and 2) none of the participants had parents who themselves had completed degrees from an institution of higher education. Apart from these two shared biographical facts, they were all – to the extent of my knowledge – considered to be part of the majority population of Norway. The sample included seven women and two men. With regards to geographical distribution, all but one participant had grown up on the outskirts of smaller province cities, or in entirely rural areas.

Based on the information provided by the students, most of the families fit the description of working class[18]. This was determined by examining the way the parents' occupational status matched the descriptions in the Oslo Register Data Classification Scheme (see Hansen and Ljunggren 2020: 41). Three sets of parents had farming as their primary occupation. Apart from these parents, the participants' mothers typically worked in accounting, retail, catering, or as caring assistants in the health care sector. The participants' fathers worked as skilled manual laborers, in sales or with administrative office work[19]. On the students' accounts, there seemed to be a difference between the mothers and fathers with regards to educational and occupational attainment. The fathers typically had more schooling and formal and informal vocational training than did the mothers. Both parents typically had high school diplomas, yet a few had primary school as their highest educational attainment, and a few had shorter educations below the university level. A few also noted that their mothers had completed high school, or an equivalent, later in life. Some also mentioned mothers having home economics

[18] A few students grew up in mixed class families, in which one parents fit the description of lower middle class according to the ORDC scheme.

[19] Two of the students describe how their fathers have undertaken a class journey of sorts – particularly with regards to income. One father has been on welfare for most of his adult life, and another is a partial welfare recipient.

training[20]. Despite some variation in their family backgrounds, all the students shared the sentiment that their parents were cultural outsiders to university life, or the academic field.

Data collection procedure and ethical considerations

In what follows I will detail the practicalities of the interview situation as well as ethical considerations[21]. Keeping the participants well informed of the project and what participation entails was key throughout the whole data collection phase. I asked students that wanted to take part in the study to set aside approximately one and a half hours for the interview session. The actual interviews lasted, on average, around one hour. Two of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, whereas the other seven were completed through the video chat platform, Zoom.[22]

I set aside time for a marked brief and debrief at the beginning and end of the interviews. Before the interviews, I distributed the information sheet and the informed consent form via email, so the participants could familiarize themselves with the objectives of the study ahead of our interview appointment. In the introductory brief, I went over these documents again, asking if the participants had any questions. At this point, I also stressed that participation was voluntarily and that the students could choose to withdraw their informed consents at any time, also after the interview was finished (adhering to the ethical guidelines by NSD). Moreover, I let them know that they should only volunteer as much information they felt comfortable providing. Given that comfortable participants tend to provide more detailed accounts in qualitative interviews (Hill and Hall 1963), I was cognizant of the importance of establishing rapport with the participants during the introductory brief. Given that the "affective" dimension of a video interview is – if not compromised, then certainly, different (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2016)[23] I had to think differently about how to create a conducive environment to in-depth qualitative interviewing. One minor adjustment I tried was to create a frame around

[20] Known as "husmorskoler" in Norwegian.

[21] The very first step of the data collection phase was to get the project approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). It was only after getting the clearance from NSD that i began recruiting participants.

[22] As the data collection phase took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was not an option to conduct all the interviews face-to-face. Thus, I had to transition from "face-to-face qualitative data collection to a 'socially distant' method" (Lobe et al. 2020: 2). Although it is my personal preference to conduct interviews in person, a decided pro of Zoom is the flexibility offered to both interviewer and interviewees (Archibald et al. 2019).

[23] This contrast was particularly stark seeing how one of the in-person interviews took place in a cozy library corner a rainy afternoon – to which connecting over video inevitably feels "flatter" in comparison.

the video interview by writing to the participants to suggest they prepare a hot beverage ahead of our research conversation. When the interviews were drawing to an end, and after I had turned the recorder off, I conducted a short debrief. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) uphold that a marked check-in before parting ways is a part of adhering to sound ethical practice. Based on the participants' interest, I used this time to speak "more about the purpose and design of the interview study" (Kvale and Brinkman 2009: 129). This was also a time to answer questions and address potential concerns that emerged for the participants during the interview[24].

I recorded all the interviews using a digital audio recording software[25]. In the brief ahead of the interviews, I asked the participants if they agreed to be recorded in this way. I was prepared to take notes by hand, if need be, but this proved unnecessary as all the participants agreed to having their respective interviews recorded. While asking for consent to record, I explained to the participants how the data materials would be stored safely. Adhering to the University of Oslo's protocol for the storage of personal data[26], I uploaded the files directly onto the university's "storage hotel" – in which secure data storage is guaranteed by the institution. To ensure the recorded files would not leak out in any way, I deleted the files from the recording device directly after uploading them to the storage hotel.

Anonymity and confidentiality have been a key concern in all stages of the research process.[27] While transcribing, I protected confidentiality by omitting names and other potentially recognizable details from the interview transcripts. Moreover, contact information was stored separate from recordings and transcripts. The printed versions of the transcripts were kept inside a locker when not within eyesight during use. I decided to not anonymize the University of Oslo because I deemed the context of this old and prestigious institution important to anchor the first-generation students' stories contextually. However, I anonymized the other institutions some of the first-generation students had been at prior to enrolling at Blindern – either for bachelor level studies, or the master programs in humanities. Some of the master programs in the humanities are quite small, and therefore mandated extra attention toward anonymization of their program of study: In the case where a particular student was the sole representative for

[24] None mentioned having specific concerns after the interview. Instead, many expressed that they were happy for an opportunity to share reflections on how it is to be the first in their family going to university.
[25] As the University of Oslo does not permit to record research interviews on personal phones, I used a digital Dictaphone for this purpose.
[26] According to the classification system used by the University of Oslo, my research data were "yellow"
[27] I looked to the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee to stay up to date on prevailing ethical guidelines.

a single humanities program, I anonymized the individual by assigning them to a different course of study. I also assigned the students different bachelor's programs where I deemed that this was required to maintain anonymity. In a few instances, the students notified me during the interview not to include certain pieces of information. In addition to respecting these specific requests, I relied on my judgement to strike a sound balance between including other details and omitting revealing information in the course of analysis.

Analytical approach

There are many ways to go about qualitative analysis, and I have not adhered strictly to one approach. Yet, as an overarching guideline I took inspiration from Holloway and Jefferson's (2013) "holistic interpretation" of data as outlined in their book about narrative interviews which I took inspiration from. The key idea in this approach is "to keep the whole [of the interviews] in mind" as to not fragment the data to the extent where it loses touch with the overarching "concerns" of the participants (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 75). Considering how *repetition* of dispositions, attitudes, values, thought patterns and so on is key to get a sense of a person's habitus (Bourdieu 1987, cited in Burke 2011) it was also important to keep the whole of the first-generation students in mind in order to be able to identify potential tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus.

It is not easy to say *when* precisely a qualitative interview project enters the analysis phase. It has been suggested that analysis starts as the researcher comprehends the narratives offered during the interview conversation (Brinkman 2013: 61). Moreover, initial analysis continues during the transcription phase, which is part of the preparatory work for more in-depth analysis (Kvale and Brinkman 2009: 180). While some of the spontaneous analysis started during the interviews, my approach to analysis were divided into three main phases: 1) transcription and notetaking, 2) theoretical and thematic coding and organization of data and 3) write up and rewriting.

I transcribed the interviews one after the other, while completing the interview phase at the same time.[28] A benefit of this approach was that I to a certain extent was able to "have the social and emotional aspects of the interview situation present or reawakened during transcription" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 180). As attention to how encounters between

[28] To aid this process, I utilized the F5 transcription software.

habitus and field produce affective experiences such as fit and misfit, and associated emotions, I deemed it important to transcribe the interviews while the aforementioned aspects were still fresh in mind. To capture the affective dimension of the interviews – in line with my psychosocial approach inspired by Reay (2005: 2015) – I also deemed it important to pick up on *how* things were said while going over the transcriptions in the analysis phase. The way "talk is prepped with verbal and non-verbal signals that can change the tenor of conversation and meaning" (Oliver et al. 2005: 1276) is the central idea behind paying close attention to how things were said. To make sure a level of detail regarding manner of speech was carried over into the written transcripts, took note of long pauses or moments when the participants seemed hesitant, unsure, particularly confident, exited and so on. To ensure confidentiality I changed dialects into written Norwegian ("Bokmål") – while keeping a few dialect words and grammar as to not "dilute" the participants speech. However, since I made use of English as a working language in this thesis, some of these linguistic nuances Norwegian speakers would have recognized as sociolects associated with working-class environments were lost in translation[29].

After transcribing, I read through all the transcripts and marked down passages that seemed important in some way. This way of gaining a thorough overview of the data material is a process that has been referred to as "immersion" (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 64). In this phase I also wrote an initial summary of the themes and dilemmas that stood out most clearly to me in the interviews and transcripts. I also wrote what has been referred to as a "pen portrait" (2012: 65) which is a short note aimed to "grasp the form" – or broad strokes – of the interviews. While undertaking this work, I also noted down potential "fractures" in the narratives (Holloway and Jefferson 2013: 65), such as places where the participants would provide counternarratives later in the sitting. This way of proceeding is connected to the point about perceiving "the whole [- of the interview transcripts - as] greater than the sum of its parts" (64). After the immersion aimed at getting an overview of "the gist" of the interviews, I coded the transcripts by hand in accordance with both theoretical and thematic codes. For the former type of codes, I kept the foundation of the theoretical framework in mind – the encounter between habitus and field – while coding. Examples of such theoretically informed codes was "transformation" "ambivalence" "contradiction" and "split habitus." Examples of the thematic codes were "clever students" "drinking" "elite environment" "insecurity" "fun" "learning" and "family." Based in this code work, and early drafting and redrafting of the material I organized the findings into the three different analysis chapters: 1) At University: Between Fun and

[29] I translated all the quotes picked out for analysis myself.

Insecurity, 2) Aspirations: Between Interests and Responsibilities and 3) Invested in Becoming Someone.

4. At University: Between Fun and Insecurity

In this chapter, I investigate how the first-generation studnets depicted their motivations to pursue higher education, and what characterized their stories of initial experiences as *newcomers* to the academic field. Here, I explore how a *desire for knowledge* was a central underpinning in the first-generation students' stories of wanting to pursue higher education and later master's degrees in the humanities at the University of Oslo. I showcase how the first-generation students' dedication towards in the *intrinsic* aspects of university or – the fun of studying – represented a *contrast* to the more utilitarian, practical, or rather, *responsible* orientation towards education in their home environments. Demonstrating a wanting to belong in an academic environment I look at their experiences of starting university as the first-in their families. And how the particular context of campus Blindern, and the other students the first-generation students encountered and compared themselves to there, exposed various tensions in their non-academic habitus. The ways in which the first-generation students' stories oscillated between fun and insecurity is a key point of departure for this chapter.

Desire for knowledge

A strong interest for their subject areas in the humanities, and for the act of learning, was a reoccurring topic in the first-generation students' stories. Apart from potential career opportunities, a *desire for knowledge* was an important underlying motivational factor that drew the first-generation students to university. The English literature student, Nina, had grown up in a small rural village. Unlike her parents, whom she said "have never studied and probably don't have any particular intellectual interests" Nina was eager to start university after high school. She said: "I was really ready to start studying – actually, it was almost the same for me what program I enrolled in – as long as I could move to the cities and start studying." Morten was also concerned about the potential to pursue his academic interests – in history – at university. Before "suddenly" deciding he wanted to study, he had completed his training as an electrician in high school. I asked him about what spurred this change of plans:

> […] It probably was a bit like self-realization you could say, um, I think. And since [starting university] I have gotten many other academic interests as well, so now I can hardly decide what I want to study. So, that was quite a transition from being done with electrical training and then um… so, learn more. And which actually, represents a stark contrast to most of the rest of the family (Morten, History student).

These examples capture two of the central elements in this analysis: 1) the first-generation students see their educational choice, and academic interests, as a contrast to that of their parents and families, and 2) they were motivated by becoming part of an academic community and the opportunity to learn more at a higher level – more so than pursuing a specific educational program or profession training. Their educational choices – which led them to various master programs in the humanities at the time of the interviews – is one of *going against the grain*. Especially considering how students with parents of low educational attainment had been found to favor the security associated with shorter profession studies (Askvik 2015).

The fun of studying

"Fun" was probably the word the first-generation students used most often to describe the act of studying. Underneath their stories of *the fun of studying* was descriptions of themselves as intellectually curious people who valued learning and knowledge. In the above example Morten described how starting university he had "gotten many other academic interests" apart from History. The way Morten later in our interview casually mentioned that he planned to spend the upcoming holiday "reading up on" Sociology, which was one of his newfound interests, underscored the way he saw himself as intellectually curious – *beyond* his area of study. Similarly, Siri said she "is really curious" by nature. Many students depicted their motivation to continue onto master level studies as being founded in their academic *interests* and the *fun* they were having with their subjects. This was the case with the French student, Vilde – who had grown up in a small peripheral town with her father who worked in retail:

> **Juni**: But, I'm getting curious: how did you decide on what comes next after completing the bachelor in French?
>
> **Vilde**: Ah, like that what I was going to do – that I was going to do the masters?
>
> **Juni**: Yes?
>
> **Vilde:** No, it had to do with French, especially French – I'm really captivated by French! It's really… European studies! So much fun! French – more fun than ever! And it's like: 'woah!' I'm so fascinated, and it adds so much to my life. So that [I can tell]: I'm spending a lot of time on it (p. 9)

The *excitement* and *passion* for the subject that is tangible in this statement was representative of the sample at large. Vilde used strong affective language such as "really captivated, "more fun than ever" and "so fascinated" to describe her interest in the French language and in European studies. This type of affective language was characteristic of the way the first-

generation students spoke of the humanities subjects they were in. Siv talked about how she "loved" History. And Lise said writing is something she is "interested in" and think is both "really really difficult" and "really fun." The *seriousness* indicated by dedication to investing much time and efforts into their studies was also reflective of the sample. Nina talked of planning out different ideas for her master's thesis while still in the process of completing her bachelor's degree. In other interviews, seriousness was indicated by talk of wanting to "do well" academically. Maria, for instance, spoke with excitement about receiving positive feedback on her first longer assignment at the master level.

On the one hand, the first-generation student's perception that studying is fun, must be taken at face value: they genuinely thought it was fun to study and to immerse themselves in their intellectual interests. I am also connecting their repeated stress on the fun of studying – oftentimes interwove with stories of academic insecurity and anxiety about the future – to their status as newcomers in the academic field. The fun of studying, and the way it *adds meaning* to the first-generation students' lives – can be considered a *social good* associated with the academic middle-class tradition (Sakslind, Skarpens and Hestholm 2018). The first-generation student's entrance to the academic field illustrates how this good – or the *intrinsic* values of education – is made available to a group of which it was otherwise not readily accessible for. Following this, the first-generation student focus on the fun of studying can be understood as a subtle expression of how their habitus is out of field: they are making *explicit* that which can be considered a 'taken for granted' (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) part of the academic tradition – namely, that education is more than job training and the socialization into a certain profession.

But what will you become?

As flagged above, the first-generation students frequently drew lines of comparison between *home* and *university* - understood as their *old* field and *new* field. This was a considerable part of the humanities students' *meaning making* about being the first in their immediate families to pursue higher education. And also indicative of the *cultural differences* they perceived to reside between these two fields. Siri, for instance – who had a similar rural farming background to Nina – used the phrasing "in the *world* that I am from" (emphasis added) to explain how home was *different* from university.

Orientations towards the *purpose* of education was one such key difference according to the first-generation students. In speaking about this, they explained how "people from home" – as Ingrid phrased it – oftentimes asked them various versions of the question: "*But what will you become?*" Implying how it is less than self-explanatory what a masters' degrees in the humanities will lead into post-graduation. Ingrid, who studied art history, talked brought this up in our interview. She was from a small and isolated village she described as "traditional" and said it felt difficult to explain about her studies to "people from home:"

> For example, I'm noticing that many ask about – like, when I tell them what I'm studying, then it's like … A very common question is: 'But what will you become then? So, what type of job will you end up with then? That is very common amongst many of those who don't have… umm, higher education themselves – who've done vocational training (Ingrid, Art History).

This orientation towards 'becoming *something*' (Vogt 2007: 36-37, emphasis added) can be understood as a reflection of the practically, or *vocationally*, oriented largely working-class environments the first-generation students were from. Most had grown up in rural areas or on the outskirts of smaller provincial towns. Their parents had vocational training, were farmers or conducted jobs that did not require education. Additionally, many had siblings that were in, or had completed vocational training such as cook, carpeting or care assistant. As such, the 'what-will-you-become'-question came to symbolize *deep-seated* difference in ways of relating to work and education between the academic field and the first-generation students home environments. Where the primary focus at home was on "becoming something" the first-generation students' stories was pointing towards how they wanted "something more" (Morten) out of their education. As demonstrated above, a central part of their stories of going to university can be summed up as a desire for knowledge – or the "alluring" aspects of learning, as Nina put it.

At home, however, the students said there was little regard for "learning and stuff" as the history student, Per, phrased it. He spoke about how there is "an entirely different culture" concerning education where he grew up – considering how it is supposed to lead directly into a job. Reflecting upon these differences during the structured part at the end of the interview, Per said:

> **Juni:** Okey, so then I have a question about class. How would you describe your family's class position?
>
> **Per:** Umm, like what are you thinking about?
>
> **Juni:** Um, just any way you would…

> **Per:** Like, it's definitely a working-class family that I come from. That's why there was so much focus on work – or so, in my life it's been like, [it's good if] you do higher education, but it was mostly [seen as a way] to get a job. It wasn't any focus on learning – like, they considered being interested in learning and stuff like that as a side thing. 'Cause they're very vocational [in their thinking] (Per, History student).

From Per's point of view, a *utilitarian* view of education with limited attention to *intrinsic* values is linked to class position. Considering this difference, many students spoke of how their families seemed unable to fully understand their educational investments – emotional, energetic and financial – and its possible future returns. Morten experienced this *lack of understanding* of the educational path he had chosen after deciding he did not want to be an electrician "for the rest of [his] life:"

> **Juni:** But your parents – how do you speak to them about your education?
>
> **Morten:** Um, they were a bit skeptical in the beginning – which is a bit interesting. But, yeah, no, there's been a lot of talk along the lines of [me being an] 'eternal student' - which has been annoying, 'cause I'm not thinking about myself as an eternal student, like, that's not something I would want to do (Morten, History student).

In this passage, Morten spoke about how his parent's initial reactions to his educational choice were one of "skepticism," thinking that it would lead their son to be a student "forever and ever." This indicated that they did not consider Mortens's decision to study history particularly *useful* from a job perspective. One of the students, Siv, offered an analysis on the usefulness of pursuing a master's degree in the humanities. While she, together with her friends, trifled with the idea of how vocational training would have left them already in full time work and with no student depth – I challenged her on the seriousness of this talk. To this she replied that she would not have chosen differently but that "hypothetically, it would have been the smartest to do vocational training."

The first-generation student's investment in their desire for knowledge, and the fun they are having with their studies can be understood as a transgression of educational norms embedded in their 'primary' habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Which orientations and motivations were challenged by the valuation of intrinsic aspects of education characteristic of the academic tradition. Considering the utilitarian orientation towards education that prevailed in the first-generation student's home environments, the opportunity to pursue academic interests made available at university represented a new 'horizon' (Curl et al. 2018) to the first-generation students. Or a *positive* byproduct of their experiences as newcomers in the academic field. This accords with findings on how first-generation students could experience that starting university

allows "aspects of self to flourish for the first time" (Aries and Seider 2005: 433). Which can be seen as the flip side of finding opportunities at home to be *limited* (Curl et al. 2018; Lehmann 2014) like the first-generation students saw the limited focus on learning for its own sake to be. Following this, I argue that the first-generation students' *appreciation* for, and *dedication* towards, intrinsic aspects of education is reflective of a *change* in their habitus. I connected this alteration in their embodied orientations, to them being motivated by the *illusio,* or interest, of the academic field (Bourdieu 1998: 77). Which I understand to be centered around the pursuit of knowledge based in genuine interest. To be *in* this illusio – or motivational force of the academic field – also contributed toward making the pursuit of a long discipline study, associated with risk of low employability (Lødding, Aamodt, and Skule 2017), stand before the first-generation students as a 'meaningful' undertaking that is 'worth investing one's energy in' (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127).

The 'clever' first-generation students

In a critique of Bourdieu, Mallman (2018) problematized the perception that tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus is spurred as a result of upwardly mobiles entrance to the academic field. Instead, he suggested that changes in habitus in the form of orientation towards the academic field, could originate much earlier than starting university. I argued above that the first-generation students desire for knowledge represented a change in their habitus – in the form of a shift *away* from a primarily utilitarian orientation towards education. However, in line with Mallman (2018), I am suggesting that the *inkling* toward this shift, in the direction of valuing the intrinsic aspects of education started, while the first-generation students were still in school. A consistent finding in the interview was that the first-generation students brought with them a positive academic self-image – or learner identity – to university. They described themselves as *clever.* Maria said she "had always been a clever student" several times throughout the interview. Similarly, Vilde spoke of how she "used to be a really good student, like, in high school." Like the students themselves, I connect this positive learner identity as a factor motivating them to pursue higher education in the first place.

Oftentimes, it was family or teachers who had endorsed the first-generation students' academic potential, reinforced their positive learner identities, and encouraged them to pursue higher education. Per said his parents had recognized his "academic potential" from an early age and that "they had wanted to 'foster'" these abilities in him. Both his parents had vocational training

as their highest educational attainment – a path his younger brother also followed by training to become a carpenter. Somewhat humbly, he said: "I think I had pretty good grades [in school]" and "it was sort of like I was the academic one in the family." Per's sense of being "the academic one in the family" was shared by most of the first-generation students. Although some, such as Siri and Ingrid had older siblings who seemed to have paved the way for them into university. And like Per, Maria spoke of how her mother had endorsed her academic potential:

> She has always said stuff like 'oh, you're so smart!' - because I was like a straight As' student. I was really clever, like a 'clever student' since I was young. So, she was going like: 'you'll become someone influential and get a high education' (Maria, Philosophy)

Several also experienced this type of positive attention from their teachers. Siri mentioned how her Norwegian teacher in high school had said she had "talent for philosophy" and suggested she should apply for philosophy at university. Similarly, Siv spoke of a teacher "who had said something along the lines of: 'you're smart enough to become a researcher'." In sum, this positive reinforcement instilled them with a positive learner identity that revolved around a self-perception of being good students. Underlying these messages from family and teachers was the idea that the first-generation students were *special:* their academic inclinations set them apart from their home environment in which high education was not the norm. In many ways, these students fit Reay and colleagues' (2009) descriptions of first-generation "academic stars" who "had already developed qualities of self-reliance, self-regulation and resilience through the process of becoming successful academic learners at school" (1112). The message the clever students – or academic stars – in the present study received from their home environments was that they ought to take their talent, smartness, and academic potential into higher education. Their academic abilities – in the form of being perceived by themselves and others as 'good students' – functioned as a *door opener* into university.

'Nobody at home' was interested in literature

A few students spoke of how, not only their positive learner identity, but their *creative* interests s*et them apart* from peers, and family. Nina described herself as "a bit more of a creative child" who liked to draw, paint, and read books, whereas Ingrid said she has been "interested in literature ever since [she] was a child." Depictions of themselves as children who "liked to read" resonates with previous findings on upwardly mobiles self-reported dispositions (Hundal 2018: Mallman 2017b: 23). In addition to the interest in literature both these students shared,

Ingrid spoke of how she liked to write and "make up stories" as well as creating theatrical and music shows when she was a child. In reflecting upon these creative sides, Ingrid says she did not get to take part in any organized activities that lined up with her interests:

> That was in case something I did on my own, or with siblings and friends. It wasn't as if I was a part of any organized activities, or … There were very few activities - or *cultural* activities anyway. It was mainly soccer and handball (Ingrid, Art History student, transcription, p. 7).

This description of limited access to organized leisure activities in a rural working-class environment, and particularly cultural activities associated with the middle-classes, accords with Anette Lareaus' (2011) findings on class-based child rearing practices. Interestingly, both Nina and Ingrid spoke of a strong feeling of being *different* from their families and home environments from early on. Moreover, it is worth noting how their stories are indicating an orientation towards the humanities already from childhood. Similar tales of early distinction from one's environment of origin has been demonstrated in qualitative research on individuals' experiences with social mobility (e.g. Mallman 2018; Reay et al. 2009). Like Mallman (2018), I propose that this sense – both of limited access to cultural activities and the way their interests distinguished them from the norm – can represent a 'transition' to middle-class type of life from early on.

Meeting likeminded at university

The first-generation students highly developed academic dispositions – represented by their self-perception as 'clever students' – and their intellectual interests, set them apart from their home environments. As such, some of the student's looked to university as a place where they could meet *likeminded* people. This was perhaps best illustrated in Nina's depiction of starting university:

> **Juni:** […] So, you said you 'wanted to get away' and stuff, and that you got a new 'network' at university. Do you want to speak more about that? And how it was?
>
> **Nina:** Well, there was the part about meeting people that was interested in the same things that I was. Like, I enrolled in that program because I was interested in literature, and I can't really say that I knew a lot of people in high school or middle school that was particularly interested in literature – nobody at home really spent any time on that. So, it was kinda *fun* to be with people you could discuss things with and stuff (Nina, English literature, emphasis added).

Note how here again, the term *fun* is used by the first-generation students to depict their time at university. Here, specifically to denote the opportunity to *discuss* academic topics with fellow students that shared their interests. Ingrid was equally excited to be in an environment

where she got to be with people who shared similar interests as her - "probably for the first time in [her] life," as she expressed it. Again, the students are drawing lines of comparison between home and university. As mentioned earlier, university represented a new 'horizon' (Curl et al. 2018) to the first-generation students. One aspect of this was the opportunity to pursue their academic interests, or their desire for knowledge.

Another was the ability to *share* their interests with others who found engaging these topics *meaningful* and *worthwhile.* To Per, this was an important part of the social aspects of going to university. In his, and most of the other students' stories, it was particularly in the context of campus Blindern – at the University of Oslo – that depictions of both social and academic aspects of *campus culture* were most vivid and affective. Therefore, I am basing most follows on the first-generation students' concrete experiences situated at campus Blindern. Per described this culture in the following terms:

> Naw, it was like a standard student partying scene: So... yeah, drinking, and social gatherings and lots of discussions and study groups and so on. 'Cause there were people that were very interested in – that loved history and stuff, so we did talk a lot about that (Per, History student).

This example gives a peak into how many of the first-generation students experienced the campus culture at Blindern. One in which *debates,* and *drinks,* were central. To some of the students, like Per, this provided a venue to share their "love" or interest in academic subjects and topics. But apart from intellectual discussions over drinks: What more was Blindern social- and academic scene made up of according to the first-generation students? Where the other first-generation students as excited as Per to partake in what he referred to as the "standard student partying scene" at oldest and most prestigious university in the middle of a Norway's largest city? And how did the first-generation students' see themselves in comparison to the *other* students they encountered at Blindern?

Do I fit in here?

Until now I have demonstrated how the first-generation students were motivated to pursue master's degrees out of a *desire for knowledge*. Moreover, I have argued that this appreciation for the intrinsic value of education represents a *shift* away from the utilitarian orientation toward education they experienced at home – in the form of a *change* at the level of habitus. I also showcased how starting university represented an opportunity for the first-generation students to *share* their intellectual interest with *likeminded* – in a way they did not perceive to

be accessible at home. Moreover, I connected their interests in *learning* more after high school and the *fun* they reported having with their studies to their self-perception as 'clever students' in school. I am suggesting that these aspects comprised, indicated a *wanting* to belong in an academic community on the part of the first-generation students. This was put into relief in Ninas' descriptions of the motivation to become a student:

> I was actually really ready to get away and do something new. And to just sit alone and get immersed in one topic, almost every day – that suits me really well (Nina, English literature).

Another example was the way Vilde said she had "not even thought of it as an option *not* to go to university." The same can be said about, Siv, who also spoke in terms of starting university as a *natural* choice – while at the same time mentioning how one of her teachers in high school had told her she had the potential "to become a researcher." In line with Reay and colleagues (2009) and their research on British working-class students in an elite environment, I suggest that the first-generation students displayed "highly developed academic dispositions" and that they could be understood as *'familiar strangers'* in the academic field" (1115). The idea of a familiar stranger is a play on the influential study on working-class academics describing them as '*strangers in paradise'* (Ryan and Sackrey 1996). Reay's take on this description highlights the *ambivalent* position the first-generation students could be said to be in: On the one side they displayed a propensity towards wanting to belong in an academic context. And on the other, their stories reflected social – as pertaining to their place on campus – and academic insecurities that could be understood as connected to their non-academic habitus. In what follows, I will elaborate on some of the patterns that appeared connected to the pattern pertaining to how the first-generation students can be understood as 'familiar strangers.' To give an overview, I look to Siv's example: Despite a positive learner identity and validation and encouragement from teachers to pursue higher education, she said her initial time at the University of Oslo – as a bachelor student right out of high school – left her questioning: "Ai! Do I fit in here? Am I good enough to be here?" She and many of the other students had a reflexive relationship to this kind of thinking. Yet, while Siv challenged the truthfulness of her insecure thoughts, she said she still grappled with them after many years at Blindern and that "it has gotten worse in the transitioning to the master level." What were some of the dynamics undergirding the insecurities the 'clever' and motivated first-generation students' reported experience upon entering the academic field generally, and campus Blindern specifically?

Arriving at Campus Blindern: A 'driven' environment

Before continuing, I will outline some of the characteristic of Blindern that stood out in the first-generation students situated depictions of their time as students there. In comparison to the other higher educational institutions the first-generation students had been at, their descriptions of their time at the University of Oslo were more vivid and pronounced. As such, most of what follows in the analysis is based in the contextual setting of Blindern. An air of high academic *expectations* was among the first thing several of the participants said they took note of upon arriving there. As Morten expressed it: "Um, yeah, the first day... it was sort of like a feeling of coming from the outside and integrating into something new – um, with a bit of an unfamiliar feeling of expectations." Siri spoke in similar terms in a vivid description of her first day at Blindern – as a social science bachelor student at that time:

> **Siri:** I was headed for the big auditorium all the way down the hallway at...um...
>
> **Juni:** At the Eilert Sundt house, or?
>
> **Siri:** Yes! […] And then I got in there, and its completely full of people that is going to start studying […] And then I remember the, um, leaders of the faculty spoke a lot about how, like, we were at the best institute [for this program] in the Nordic region, and that all we had to do was to 'read away' (Siri, History).

This setting illustrates the context the first-generation students are finding themselves in: They have become students at the oldest and most prestigious university of Norway. Many of the faculties, institutes and programs are leading in their fields. The message to the students is clear: "read away." Implying that the students ought to *do good*. In addition to how the students picked up on a message that relevant work experience alongside the studies was imperative. Siv said: "One of the first things they told us was 'you need to get experience: if you don't have experience, you won't have a job" I read out of the first-generation students' stories, that this air of high academic expectations felt unfamiliar to many participants and that it evoked a reflection process on how to position themselves in what can be described as a *driven* environment. Siri said:

> At Blindern there was a lot to live up to and I think I thought that if I make can make it there it would, I guess, benefit me in a way. But then there was the question: are you able to make it? (Siri, 4).

I interpreted Siris' question of making it along the same lines as Sivs' talk of doubting fitting in and being "good enough" – more like a reflection of underlying insecurities and not so much an expression of doubt that could potentially spur self-exclusion from university all together. But is there something unique about the insecurities the participants spoke of that pertained to being the first in their families going to university? Something that could be reflective of having

a habitus that was shaped in a non-academic, oftentimes rural and largely working-class, environment?

Encountering 'the confident other'

While all students arguably, and possibly, experiences bouts of insecurity and misfit; I took note on the way the first-generation students insecurities appeared connected to widespread self-comparison to students that *came across* as more familiar in the academic field. Students that *seemed* to already fit into the driven environment at Blindern. Siv was one of the students that included a description of herself in relation to other students in her account of the very first day:

> **Juni:** How would you describe your initial time – when you came to Blindern – how did it feel? Possibly even the very first day?
>
> **Siv:** So, I felt a bit like a "farmer in the city," 'cause I am from a small place in the countryside. So, just like being in the city, and then arriving on campus where there was... I think the thing I was noticing the most was the way everyone was so … ambitious, and that they were so... um, they weren't just knowledgeable, but they liked to show it off in a different kinda way. In a way that I wasn't used to - I wasn't used to... [cuts herself off] (Siv, History)

The first-generation students' stories – not only of their first encounter with university, but of their entire educational journey as described in the interviews – were thick with such descriptions of peers that came across as more confident, ambitious, intellectual, well-articulated, well-read, experienced in debate culture, in the know of institutional workings and relaxed about job prospects. In generalized terms, I refer to the descriptions of these peers as 'the confident other' (Mallman 2017). How these "other" students experience their time at university is beyond the scope of this study. It is the way the idea of the confident other makes the first-generation students perceive, and feel about, themselves upon entering and progressing through the university which is of importance.

The first-generation students' descriptions of the confident other were sometimes slightly derogatory, such as: students that "seemed like they 'owned' the world a bit" (Siri), "it was clear that here there were people with 'important' parents" (Siv), or "smarty-pants" that came across as "intellectually arrogant" (Morten) and "mini-professors" that "spoke in a philosophical manner" (Maria) were some of the descriptions that stood out. The application of such gentle mockery to describe the confident other can be understood as a form of boundary work in which the first-generation students saw themselves as different from the elite environment at Blindern they perceived the confident other to be a part of. Moreover, these descriptions can be seen as laden with classes perceptions of self and others. In which the first-

generation students understood themselves as lower in a social class status hierarchy than the confident other. This also mirrors the way class is understood *relationally* in Bourdieu's work. As such, one way to understand the first-generation studnets stories of comparison to the confident other is that is reflects a *discovery* of themselves as classed and situated in a setting with elite tendencies.

Maria was one of the students who had a vivid description of this type of elite environment. She had pursued her bachelor's degree at a university in a different Scandinavian country known for high academic expectations and a formal tone between students and professors. Her first reaction of starting her master's in philosophy at Blindern was one of a more "relaxed" environments, professors that were more "down to earth" and "less pressure" than she was used to at the university abroad. Her first impression was quickly subject to change:

> It was kind of totally relaxed and nice and – but then I noticed it on the master students and it var more the environment, and just, 'Shit! I don't know anything! They are overqualified!'. 'Everybody' had two bachelor's degrees that they had taken in four years. So those I studied with – I just figured out I was studying with extremely intelligent people! (Maria, Philospohy)

The above example points towards a notable ambivalence in the material: Blindern is situated in Norway – a country marked by its egalitarianism. As such, the formal tone and use of titles common at universities in other countries – like Maria said she was used to from abroad – is not common in Norwegian higher education. Yet, on the inside of the campus environment, the first-generation students are faced with what is best described as elitist tendencies. It was in their encounter with the confident other they noticed these elite facets the most. Maria, for instance, quickly came to feel "misplaced" in the social environment at Philosophy where she felt she stood out among "mini-professors:"

> But no, I feel so out of place simply because they are just incredibly … well-read. They have probably read a lot since they went to high school about these, eh, yes, philosophers – they are very philosophical in the way they talk too. And very just – I remember kind of before class they would discuss the things we were to talk about in class, and … so it is very little, small talk. While I am a little more into small talk! In a way I am trying like: 'Oh, what have you been doing? Where have you studied? What are you up to in your spare time?' things like that. But they are very academical – it is like being around mini-professors! (Maria, Philosophy)

This is an example of mismatch between the first-generation student habitus and the driven environment they found themselves to be a part of. In the above example Maria sees herself as a contrast to the confident other who appear already at home: she is not well read, she does not speak in a philosophizing manner, she would rather small talk than discuss the readings ahead of class. In short, she and the other first-generation students is not one of the 'mini-professors'. These initial reactions to Blindern can be understood as a 'shock of the elite' (Reay et al 2009:

1110) rather than misfit spurred by lack of attunement between the first-generation students' habitus and the academic field in and of itself.

Drinks and debates

As mentioned briefly above, debates and drinks appeared central in the first-generation students' depictions of Blindern's campus culture. Recall how Per referred to how the social life at Blindern was like a "standard student partying scene" characterized by discussing academic subjects in a setting of which alcohol appeared to act as a social lubricant. While Per was one of the students that found himself to be very at home in this environment, other students were put off by the alcohol culture on campus. Siri exclaimed how the drinking culture at Blindern "was a tootal shock" to her. Elaborating more on this, she talked about how she "is from a background where alcohol is a bit taboo." This did not mean complete abstention from alcohol, but a very moderate consumption – exemplifying this she said how her parents sometimes had to top two beers as type of treat on a Friday. Offering a historically founded analysis of her family's relationship to alcohol Siri suggested there could be a parallel to "the old culture of abstention" associated with parts of the Norwegian labor movement in the previous century (see Horverak 2013). In contrast to this very moderate relationship to alcohol she was used to from home, Siri depicted alcohol and campus culture in the following way:

> At university it was sort of like, it is *the only* thing you do! So, if you're going to meet someone from university, it's almost as if the only thing you do is to go like: 'Should we go grab a beer?" And then there was the thing about: 'Going *downtown* for a beer.' To me, it was just like: 'What??' And it took a long time [to get used to it] (Siri, History).

This passage is an example of how a few of the first-generation students felt at odds with the alcohol culture of the confident other – which is depicted here as students whose social student life is based around "grabbing beers." Siri said it took her a long time to adjust to this aspect of campus culture. Siv on the other hand, was not interested in adjusting and sought out alternative social scenes where she could feel more at home in – in her story the alcohol culture was just one aspect of a larger culture she felt misplaced in:

> So, in the [bachelor program], so ... there was... everyone was very ambitions, like I said – and that's of course very nice! Um, but I didn't feel at home there at all. So, it didn't take very long before I, so to speak, backed out of the social community. Actually, much because of – that's just me – but there was a lot of focus on drinking, and I don't really do that. So, it was difficult to get to know people … So, I ended more up with getting friends in clubs and stuff (Siv, History).

These stories exemplify how a few of the first-generation students found the centrality of alcohol in Blinder's campus culture foreign and something that needed getting used to; or off-putting and deciding to seek out alternative social scenes. A similar tendency has been demonstrated by Armstrong and Hamilton, who found that students with a working- to lower middle-class background at a larger American university often "found the party scene [dominated by their more affluent peers] off-putting" (2013: 96). Such variations between class background and alcohol have also been demonstrated in Norway. Pedersen, Bakken and von Soest (2017) show that within Oslo, alcohol consumption was most frequent at the schools with the highest proportion of more affluent students. It is plausible that many of these affluent high schoolers in Oslo start studying at Blindern and reproduce their drinking pattern when they become students. As such, this drinking culture must be understood as one facet of the elitist tendencies at Blindern – which seemed foreign and off-putting to some of the first-generation students in this study.

As mentioned, Blindern' drinking culture was frequently connected debating culture, in the first-generation student stories. Siri described the campus culture as composed of "many politically active people, and lot's that had a very different background than me – many were very proactive." When I asked Siri to speak more about the campus culture she had described, she said:

> Um, yeah... I think, um, it was sort of like... I just got totally struck by how many strong personalities and like how much will power… And I felt in a way that I did not get any 'room' in it all. Also, there was a very hard debating culture – how easy it was to become invisible. I was used to a bit more cautious way to deal with others' opinions (Siri, History)

The "harsh debating culture" Siri experienced on Blindern evoked a feeling of "invisibility" and like she was "not getting any 'room' amidst it all." Participation in the debating culture comes to symbolize the degree to which students feel comfortable – or entitled - "taking up space" on campus – in the form of having their opinions heard. Yet, to many of the first-generation student this type of debating culture was foreign at the level of habitus. Their linguistic dispositions were formed outside of the academic field (see Lareau 2011). From Siri's point of view, taking up "space", "standing up" for your opinions and not looking to compromise "all the time" is key to partake in a discussion. As what comes natural to her is a more "careful way" of engaging others' opinions, she wants to acquire some of the qualities needed to partake in the debating culture on campus. I interpreted this type of want to change aspects of self as indicative of a sense of lack that produced a sense of social misfit in Blindern's driven environment.

'Crisis of confidence'

As mentioned, the first-generation students came to university with the academic confidence of the 'clever students' they had come see themselves as throughout their time in school. Even the two students who had done vocational training and chosen practically oriented course of study in high school – Morten and Lise – mentioned how they had managed well with the theoretical aspects of schoolwork. To many of the 'clever' first-generation students starting university produced a sense of turning academically insecure. One aspect of this insecurity had to do with how encounters with the confident other in class *challenged* the first-generation students' perceptions of themselves as 'clever students' in school. In other words: they were no longer a big academic fish in a small non-academic pond, but one among many capable students at university. One of the initial reactions Morten had to starting university was characteristic for many of the first-generation students:

> **Juni:** You said you felt like there was some 'resistance' in the 'integration' and like you felt 'it was almost like a class difference on campus.' Do you have any examples of how you noticed it?
>
> **Morten:** Um... there were at least some of the other students that I perceived as - how to call it? Maybe a bit more 'intellectually arrogant' than I was used to. I wasn't used to knowing so called 'smarty-pants,' so I think that factored into it. […] It was a bit, like: when you feel like there is suddenly a lot of people around you who is a lot smarter than you're used to feel. Like, at home I was among the better ones and then I came to university and was suddenly just standard (Morten, p. 3).

Starting university meant that the first-generation students were no longer "among the better ones" as Morten quite humbly put it. Siv put it more bluntly: "Ever since primary and secondary school I wasn't used to *not* being the smartest, because most of the time I was – not to sound like I'm bragging or anything – but that's how it was." Starting university made Siv feel like she "was not as smart as [she] used to be." It was comparison of self to the presumably "very knowledgeable" confident other that made the first-generation students feel insecure about their intellect and their academic capabilities. The term *crisis of confidence* (Reay et al 2009: 1112) has been used to describe situations such as the above; where first-generation students' transition from high school to university is marked by finding that they are no special 'good students' but one among many academically capable students. As demonstrated, many of the first-generation students experienced a crisis in confidence at various points of time in their educational journey: They felt like they went from 'good students' that had been perceived as special at home due to their academic abilities; to *standard* or *mediocre* at university, as some

of them phrased it. This evoked insecurities in the form of inferiority, lack and misplacement in many of the first-generation students.

Feeling different together

The most spontaneous strategy the first-generation students employed to mitigate misfit and insecurity was to seek *companionship* with other students they perceived to be in a similar situation. Unlike the confident other, these students did not inflict a sense of being a contrast, but of being alike. An example that stood out was a friendship emerging out of a shared distance to "the academic theoretical approach:"

> **Juni:** So, you also said you felt like you 'had someone in the same situation'? Or?
>
> **Morten:** Yes, yes. There was a guy who was quite similar that I connected a lot to in the beginning … Like, very interested in history, but that hadn't read … read a lot. So, kinda more applied in his approach to history – like going to medieval festivals and stuff, that sorta thing – so yeah, more practical. And so that was more relatable than that theoretical academic approach (Morten, history student, transcription, p. 4).

Here, it is a more practical, applied, approach to learning and a mutual sense of lack that is the basis for why Morten felt like the friend he mentioned here. This friend made him feel like he "wasn't alone" in "coming from the outside and integrating into something new," like he phrased it. This example is indicative of how the first-generation students were *bonding* with others over a shared feeling of misfit and distance to the confident other. Such companionship made the first-generation students feel *less alone* in navigating university and the different type of insecurities related to being the first in their families to pursue higher education. This was perhaps most apparent in Siri's stories. She described coming to Blindern *together* with other students that also fit the description of first-generation. A shared first-generation student experience with peers from home was unique in the material. All the other participants spoke in terms of diverging from the norm at home and coming to university alone. In talking more about this shared experience, Siri said:

> **Siri:** Some of [the friends I went to high school with] were also at Blindern while I was there. And Blindern was just like a whole new universe at that time. So, I guess I can say it was a bit like we navigated it together – so that was kind of a great support and stuff. But at the same time, I think we maybe became a bit of a 'bubble'

In stark contrast to the misfit and insecurity the confident other evoked in the first-generation students, students perceived to be more alike brought about a sense of kinship and support. Due to lack of informed support, for instance, Siv described a situation in which she joined efforts

with “others who also didn’t know what they were doing.” Part of why these relationships present themselves as safe and *supportive* can have to do with a similarity in habitus and dispositional expressions. It can also be argued that the positive connections that appeared between the first-generation students and peers that appeared more alike in comparison to the distance many felt to the confident other have to do with how we are “more likely to feel comfortable around ‘people like us’” (Threadgold 2020: 90).

Summary

In this chapter, I have considered the some of the ways in which the first-generation students depicted their motivations to pursue higher education, and what characterized their stories of initial experiences as *newcomers* to the academic field. *Desire of knowledge* stood out in the material as a central motivation to pursue higher education in the first-generation students’ stories. Based on the participants descriptions, the high regard they displayed for the intrinsic values of education – frequently referred to as the *fun* of studying – represented a stark contrast to the more practical orientations towards education characteristic of their home environments. Where education was seen as a means to *become something.* Considering this, I suggested that the first-generation students already had *transgressed* embodied orientations concerning the purpose of education throught their decision to pursue a long course of study in the humanities and that their stories were reflective of a *want* to belong in an academic environment. At the same time, the interviews also revealed social and academic insecurities. I connected these insecurities to the elite tendencies they perceived at Blindern, and the widespread comparison of self to students that *appeared* more familiar in the academic field – referred to as ‘the confident other’ (Mallman 2017) in generalized terms throughout the chapter. Moreover, the way many spoke of seeking the company of peers perceived as *similar* brought the first-generation students non-academic habitus to the forefront.

Chapter 5: Aspirations: Between Interests and Responsibility

In this chapter, I investigate some of the ways in which sense of fit and misfit in the academic field is reflected in the first-generation students' stories of the *shaping* and *reshaping* of their *future aspirations*. I explore how the type of jobs the participants wanted for themselves were associated with the academic middle-classes. The chapter is structured according to variation in the sample: One group oriented themselves towards possible research *jobs in academe*, and the other group were going for *'master worthy jobs' outside of academe*. Following this, I shed light on some of the *social dynamics* I connected to the two different career orientations in the humanities students' stories. In particular I focused on how the first-generation students' *experiences* as newcomers to the academic field, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, served as a backdrop to apprehend the first-generation student's future wants and needs. Moreover, I look at how a perceived *'class ceiling'* (Laurison and Friedman 2015) appeared to affect the students' career orientations from outside, instead of, inside of academe. The way the first-generation students' stories indicated a continuous negotiation between the possibility to pursuing their academic *interests'* post-graduation and the attention to material *responsibilities* make up the key point of departure in this chapter.

Looking ahead: Two career orientations

The first-generation students were in their first or second year of various master programs in the humanities. Considering this, future *aspirations*, wants and needs, was a topic the students were concerned with. They were *looking ahead*. The students spoke of wanting to work in museums and libraries, and as editors, researchers, consultants and teachers. Arguably, their ideal jobs are indicative of a want to *work with knowledge.* Which represented a marked break with the manual labor traditions they had grown up in, and that could be understood as an aspiration to become part of the academic middle-classes. However, concerning aspirations there was a marked *split* in the sample. One group spoke in terms of orienting themselves towards a possible career in academe. The other group oriented themselves towards 'master worthy' jobs (Maria) outside of academe.

To illustrate these two paths, or career orientations, I will look towards the stories of Per and Maria who oriented themselves in either direction, respectively. Their stories stood out in the material. Both were motivated by upward mobility since youth. To achieve this, they initially

aimed at high status profession studies. Per had wanted to become a civil engineer and Maria pondered the possibility of becoming a lawyer.[30] Yet, it appeared they took a U-turn away from these plans. Like the other first-generation students, a *desire for knowledge* were evident in their stories. Maria wanted to learn more about religion, before later making her way to philosophy, and Per seemed to discover a strong interest in history upon his arrival to Blindern:

> **Juni:** So, now you have chosen to study history – and even if you applied 'a bit at random' like you said – it seems there was something about it that struck a chord with you? Or?
>
> **Per:** Yes, for sure! […] It was a bit like that for me when I was younger: That I focused on what comes *after* I am done studying. […] Whereas *now* I suddenly found myself in a situation where I was just going to *study for fun.* And then I figured that this subject is lots of fun, and that it is something I want to pursue. It is something I want to learn about and to take seriously (Per, History).

Maria was also concerned with the idea of *studying for fun* like Per talked about. However, she took a quite different position on the topic. She felt like her anxiety over, and focus on, post-graduation opportunities with a master's degree in philosophy set her apart from the peers in her program. That is, *after* she had figured that attempting to pursue a career in academe is probably not for her – although this was something she had mentioned having thought about as an option earlier in her student days:

> **Maria:** *None* of the others speak about [job opportunities] – so, at least I'm under the impression that the others are very oriented towards academe and think this is *really exciting* [overtly ironic] and interesting, and simply studies just because they think it is fun. Which actually is my impression of most of the humanities [students …]
>
> **Juni:** Okay, so it's like...?
>
> **Maria:** They are like academics! Sort of like, they do it because their brains love to think in this way – they do it because it is fun.
>
> **Juni:** Mhm?
>
> **Maria:** While I am doing it secondary because it is fun and primarily because I want a job. And then I feel a bit 'misplaced' and kind of like 'oh god, I'm too... like, it makes me different' (Maria, p. 10).

[30] Similar familial investment in children's upward mobility has been demonstrated by Mallman (2018). This route to, and parental investment in, upward mobility is mostly known in the Norwegian context to apply to children of parents with immigrant status.

To Maria, the confident other – or mini-professors, as she at one point referred to these other students – seemed to be in a position where they could afford to lose themselves to their subject areas without worrying about future work. Signalling that one can study "primarily" for fun could be understood as a *distinction* based in 'distance to necessity' (Bourdieu 1984). I am not attempting to speak to whether the peers in Marias program experienced a distance to necessity, but rather that Marias perception that they studied for fun, contributed to bring about an acute awareness of her own proximity to material necessities. Her *need* for a job. While she, like the other first-generation students appreciated the fun *of* studying, Maria felt like she was not in a position to allow herself to study *for* fun. Interestingly, this is exactly what Per claimed to do upon starting history at Blindern. After deciding civil engineering was not for him.

The example of Per and Maria highlights a central conflict in the first-generation students' stories: The balancing of pursuing academic *interests*, the fun of studying, with future *responsibilities*, or their need for a job. How did the first-generation students negotiate these wants and needs; interests and responsibilities? And what were some of the dynamics that contributed to the first-generation students either saw themselves as studying primarily for fun, like Per claimed to do, and orienting themselves toward PhD-positions? Or, while recognizing the fun of studying, oriented themselves toward 'master worthy' jobs outside of academe, like Maria?

'Taken in and up by the game'

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the first-generation students had a keen desire for knowledge. The most obvious sign of which was their decision to pursue a masters' degrees in the humanities. A discipline where "it is desire and curiosity" that can be understood as characterizing the ideal typical motivation to pursue these subject areas (Mangset 2010) and not specific types of jobs. Considering how this choice of study represented a contrast to the utilitarian orientation towards education of the students' homes, I argued that their appreciation for learning could be reflective of a change in habitus. Which I connected to them being invested in the *illusio* of the humanities, which based on their stories, I understood to be revolving around the idea of pursuing knowledge based on genuine interest. In what follows, I suggest that the first-generation student's relation to this central motivational force in the learning context they found themselves in – the primacy of the intrinsic values of education – worked to *shape* and *reshape* their future aspirations.

Four students spoke in terms of wanting their academic interests to be central in their future careers. They wanted to work *with* their subjects. This was the case with Per, Morten, Vilde and Ingrid. When I asked Vilde about her post-graduation plans she said:

> Yeah, no, I'm thinking that... Like, there is many people talking about it now, in my program. Umm, and like I said, it's not like I have a [special] job picked out... But! I do think French is fantastic fun! So, lately I've been thinking that if one can, then it must be really fun to pursue a doctorate degree (Vilde, French).

The history students, Morten and Per, had very similar stories. Per said pursuing a PhD represented "an ideal" job. Attaining a PhD position was pictured by the first-generation students as a "fun" way to continue the fun of pursuing academic interests, while getting paid at the same time. For Ingrid, the want of working with her interest in art history, took on the shape picturing a job in Oslo's cultural scene. From what I understood, these were not aspirations the first-generation students had prior to starting university. Rather, their stories indicated that their experiences at university worked to foster a motivation to become practitioners of their subjects. To illustrate the dynamics behind what can be referred to as the shaping of *upper* middle-class aspirations, I will look mainly to the three students that had started to ponder the possibility of continuing to pursue their academic interests, in history and French, at the doctorate level post-graduation. A similar interest in "academically focused graduate studies" has been demonstrated – while only mentioned in brief – in a subset of "successful" Canadian first-generation students (Lehmann 2013: 6). Some of the factors that was mentioned in relation to this kind of shift away from utilitarian focused orientation towards education, was seriousness, growing confidence, strong academic interests and support from professors (Lehmann 2013). Similar factors were evident in the stories of Per, Morten and Vilde. I am suggesting that these students want of carrying the fun of studying over into their post-graduation life, could reflect them being 'caught in and up by the game' (Bourdieu 1998: 77) *beyond* the parameters of the university. By this I mean that while there were signs that all the students were 'caught in and up' by the fun of studying, not everyone pictured centring their future work around their academic interest, like it was the case with the abovementioned students. But what contributed to the way some students were caught by the academic game?

Belief in academic potential and validation from professors

Belief in own academic potential was a common denominator among the students that gradually came to aspire towards doctorate work in their disciplines. Per has not performed as

well as wanted in the civil engineering program he started out in and saw starting history at Blindern as "kind of a new start" and recalled: "I was going to take my studies really serious […] and I was thinking that I actually *can* study, that I actually have academic potential." Per wanted to *realize* the academic potential, he was sure he had in him. Morten on the other hand needed to *discover* it first. Upon coming to Blindern he had a crisis of confidence and was also ridden by a strong sense of lack comparing himself to the confident other. Specifically, he said he felt "inferior, at least in relation to some" because his prior knowledge of history came from internet sources and not "*books"*. Yet, as he stressed, this insecurity was subject to change:

> **Juni:** Okey, so now have started to feel like it's going okey and everything. Do you want to speak more about that process?
>
> **Morten:** Um, yes... […] I think I gradually realized that I... Yeah, what kind of *potential* I actually had. Because in the three first exams the first semester.... I shockingly got an A on one of them – and that really stuck with me. Because […] I have actually never gotten better than Bs in high school, and then I got [to Blindern] and received top grades – at the one exam at least. That, that sort of upped my confidence in that area quite a lot, and made me realize that I might not be as academically inferior after all (Morten, History).

These examples indicate how either *discovering* one's academic potential or *realizing* potential perceived to be inherent was key in the first-generation students' stories of growing confidence.

I connected the *validation* from professors to these students transition from crisis of confidence upon arriving at university – and inferiority, like Morten spoke of – to a belief in their own academic potential. For example, Morten said it was the encouragement of a professor that could not seem to understand why he was "just" planning to become a teacher when he was so "interested in history" that had inspired him to switch programs. Moreover, he said one of his professors had suggested he apply for a prestigious scholarship for an exchange year abroad. The way Vilde spoke about how one of her professors "had contacted her" to ask if she wanted to work as a research assistant in French can also be considered a strong form of academic validation. Lareau (2015) has pointed to how "upwardly mobile adults often had '*cultural guides*' – teachers, coaches, relatives, or friends – who helped decode institutional rules of the game, gave advice, and intervened at crucial moments (3). The professors, who can be understood as key figures in the academic field, can be understood as functioning as 'cultural guides' for these few first-generation students. Lehman (2003) has argued that relationships to natives of a field is key in upwardly mobiles "identity (trans)formation because it symbolizes to individuals that they are (or can be) an accepted member of the group to which they aspire" (487). Without this type of acceptance from established members of the field, Lehman pointed

to how upwardly mobile relies on "self-avowals" instead of validations from specific others (2003: 499). Put differently: self-proclaimed academic interest and potential is one thing; to have it recognized by influential figures in the field is quite another.

Interestingly, "unpretentiousness" was mentioned as a quality of the professors that took on the role of cultural guides to students. "She is not very uppity" Vilde said while talking about how she had "grown close" to the professor who had offered her a job as a research assistant. Similarly, Morten described the professor that had encouraged him to apply for the top school as "very down to earth." This was brought up in Mortens's interview when he talked about "picturing" wanting to pursue a doctorate degree:

> **Juni:** Cool! Okey, a PhD, when was it you started thinking about that?
>
> **Morten:** … Hmm? I think it's a though that have grown gradually the last two years. But especially after [the year abroad] when I got to know the professor whom I befriended and who did really interesting research. And he was very 'down to earth' – so then I got the impression that you don't need to be 'up there' to do research. You can be a regular person that is just really interested in it, and wants to work with theorization and stuff… (p. 8).

Earlier in the interview Morten said it took him time "to realize" that professors are not "all-knowing almost godly." While there is a power differential embedded in the student-professor relation, there is something more than a more than the difference in experience behind these descriptions of professors. There is a clear indication of how the first-generation students carried an internal vertical class schema – in which professors were placed "up there" and the first-generation students see themselves as "regulars." Morten's example can be pictured along the lines of: 'researchers are just regular people with a strong interest in a subject' 'I am also a regular person with a strong interest in a subject' therefore, 'maybe I also can be a researcher.' Through shifting from an idealized and classed perception of professors and their research work, to one of seeing them as regular people motivated by "interest," or fun, the first-generation students were *mirroring* themselves in these figures – instead of seeing themselves as contrasts. They were in a way debunking their first impressions of "uppity" and "almost godly" professors. Like Morten reflected upon, this process – alongside the validation offered by cultural guides – factored into how some of the students gradually came to see themselves a people that potentially could apply for a PhD position. Which they pictured as a way to *continue* the fun of studying. Following this, I suggest that the cultural guides worked to *expand* the first-generation students 'field of the possibles' (Bourdieu 1984: 110). In other words: the academic validation from professors could work to reshape the first-generation students' perceptions of 'the accessible and the inaccessible' (Bourdieu 1990: 64).

Previous middle-class exposure

Interestingly, the presence of such "proxy sources of [cultural and economic] capital" (Atkinson 2012)in the form of relatives was a reoccurring topic in the interviews of the first-generation students that broke with the utilitarian view of education, embraced studying for fun and the possibility of working in academe. There was some evidence of this in some of the other interviews also, but it was most pronounced in the aforementioned group. Ingrid, who was passionate about art and who oriented herself toward working with curation had the following reflection on her educational choice:

> **Juni:** […] Okay, but what do you think actually inspired you to choose art history?
>
> **Ingrid:** Um, that's a really good question. […] I come from a really small place we art, or culture... […] Its not something most people are interested in. Um, the only thing I can point to of inspiration in my childhood is that I have an uncle who is very interested in art, and kultur, that kind of stuff. So, while growing up I got some impulses from him, in that field (Ingrid, Art History).

This example illustrates how several of the first-generation students that embraced studying for fun spoke of *previous exposure to middle-class culture*. In Ingrid'case it was her "cultural" uncle that functioned as a proxy source of capital. To Morten it was an aunt he described as "highly intelligent" and working in a high-status profession, and whom he had had "many interesting conversations with." To Vilde it was her extended maternal family – whom she perceived her mother to diverge from due having high school as her highest educational attainment and for their tight economy.[31] For instance, she admitted, somewhat embarrassed, that she applied to Blinder's history program because that is what her cousin did and that his parents discussed educational choices and "asked questions" while her own did not. These examples illustrated that several of the first-generation students came from *cross-class families* (McRae 1986 cited in Atkinson 2012: 747).

It is difficult to say how such previous exposure to middle-class culture contributed to the first-generation students' experiences at university. But it is interesting to note how the students that increasingly grew confident and embraced studying for fun – which represented a clear break with the participants home environments – had uncles and aunts that could be considered

[31] Due to the tight economy Vilde grew up in, she said it was her grandparents that "had made sure" she had all she needed in terms of material things – form what I gathered this applied to things like school supplies and different gear.

middle-class. Where cultural guides primarily validated the first-generation students place in the academic field, this previous exposure to middle-class culture first-and foremost seemed to broaden the first-generation student's 'horizon' (Curl et al. 2018). This was particularly evident in the way Ingrid said her aunt had introduced her to the world of art and literature that others in her home environment had little knowledge or, or concern for. Moreover, it is likely that these uncles and aunts had a habitus that is more aligned with the academic field, and that their "ways of life" could act as an alternative frame of reference for the first-generation students contributing to the marked shift away from insecurity and misfit visible in the stories of the first-generation students' stories of embracing studying for fun.

Pursuit of interests versus full-time work

Several of the students I understood to be 'taken in and up by the game' (Bourdieu 1998) gave off the impression that they are willing to place the pursuit of academic interests *above* securing a full-time permanent position. Ingrid, who wanted to work with art curation, explained that in Oslo's cultural scene there are "few full-time positions" and many that are interested. As such, she said she "is not expecting to secure a full-time permanent position" after completing her master's in art history. Instead of full-time work, Ingrid is willing to "work on different projects" at different cultural institutions – which she has also done through her time at Blindern:

> Maybe you work on a project, or something, and then you make it go around in that way. And for many that probably sounds completely like: 'Ahh! I don't want that!' Especially not if you are planning to settle down and have children and stuff. But in the cultural environment I know many who work in that way and who thinks that is very much okay (Ingrid, Art History)

This example is indicative of a negotiation process of weighing the opportunity to prolong the fun of studying up against material needs. To Ingrid the former was more important to her at this stage in her life. The way Ingrid demonstrated close insight into the social logic of Oslo's art field made her reflections come across as very credible. However, there was also an example of how talk of willingness to sacrifice material needs came across more as an expression of *ambivalence* and *insecurity*. This was the case with Per. Like demonstrated above, he was one of the students that embrace studying for fun, and who wanted to hold onto the intrinsic values of education also in his future work: "I felt that if I can, then I will want to do this [history] for the rest of my life," he said. To this he added that a PhD-position would be "ideal." And in the case, he did not manage to secure research work, he explained:

> I'm still at the point where, if I don't get a job that I actually like doing – that I feel is *rewarding*... […] Then I would rather just work a part time job and not... Like, just not think about it... And just make do without that money (Per, History).

This statement is quite striking. At the time of our interview Per "was at a point" where he deemed the importance of a personally "rewarding" job more important than material security. More so than an absolute reflection of Per's opinions, I'm interpreting this statement as a profound example of the insecurity and ambivalence the first-generation students experienced while negotiating between the intrinsic values of education – in the form of continued opportunity to pursue their academic interests – and future responsibilities.

A 'class ceiling'?

As demonstrated above, by drawing on the example of Per and Maria, there was a tendency in the material that the first-generation students oriented themselves toward a career in academe, *or* toward a master worthy job outside. However, the boundary between these two groups were not entirely clear cut. As briefly mentioned, Maria, for instance, mentioned thinking about the possibility to pursue research while still a bachelor student. But at the time of the master, she appeared to have ruled out this option. Nina was also one of the first-generation students that said she was motivated to consider applying for a PhD while still a bachelor student. Unlike the other first-generation students, Nina was a recent alumni. Her story is therefore one of looking back and not looking ahead, like the other three students that wanted to turn the fun of studying into full time work. "I wanted to do a masters and then hopefully work as a doctorate student later" she explained. Yet, where Maria seemed to have settled with the thought that doctorate work was probably not for her after all, Nina was *on the fence*. She said: "After the rough goings at the master program I probably lost my motivation, and also the confidence that I could make it" into a PhD-program. What were these *rough goings* at the master that seemingly *discouraged* Nina from applying for doctorate work?

When 'clever' is no longer enough

Nina came across as a highly motivated and competent student. She had pursued her bachelor's degree at smaller institution before coming to Blindern for her masters. While most of the other studnets had what can be described as a 'crisis of confidence' (Reay et al. 2009) upon starting university, Ninas' story was quite the opposite:

> I felt like I mastered studying quite well, and better than I expected. That it was just much easier for me than, yeah, than what I thought beforehand. Both the part about academic writing, but also just retaining academic knowledge in general. Yeah, it happened faster and easier than I thought – when I was coming straight from high school.

A strong sense of *fitting* in at university and in a learning environment at the higher level is evident in this example. Nina is one of the studnets that fit the description of being 'a familiar stranger' (Reay et al. 2009). However, like several other students, the difference between bachelor level studies and master level studies – and the differences between other universities and Blindern – was a central topic in Ninas' interview. Her story of experiencing relative 'ease' (Bourdieu 2000) as a bachelor studnets took a sharp turn:

> ...But then I started the master in Oslo, at Blindern, and then I hit – not 'the wall' exactly – but met a whole different environment than I expected, and that I was used to [from the other university] (Nina, English Literature).

Ninas' sense of fitting in at university was challenged upon enrolling in the old and prestigious university of Norway's capital. There were several factors she mentioned as to why the environment at Blindern was "different." Such as professors she perceived to "not always as student friendly" as her previous university, and peers that "had their established networks in Oslo" and that stood before her as a group of closed ranks. The latter factor problematizes not only being the first in one's family to pursue higher education, but also that of coming from the rural part of Norway with limited social networks in Oslo to study. "I missed someone to discuss the readings with" Nina said.

These examples are part of what constituted the *rough times* at the master program, that Nina drew on to explain why she was discouraged from applying for a PhD-position. Worth paying attention to is that it was not doubt of *academic abilities* that discouraged Nina's interest in pursuing doctorate work:

> **Juni:** Okay, so you're saying that there are 'different worlds' - do you want to speak more about that? Or, like, why does it matter?
>
> **Nina:** Umm... Yeah, so that 'they' - that perhaps several of those I studied with, in the master program, probably talked about things around the dinner table at home that I had only learned about at university. So, I had... At least it *felt* like I had a *harder* 'road to walk', and a *longer* 'road to walk' - and had to *manage on my own* (Nina, English Literature).

It is as if Nina feels like she had hit a *'class ceiling'* (Laurison and Friedman 2015). While receiving an A on her thesis saying she "still" feel confident in writing skills and ability to learn new things, she is at a point in her educational journey where it appears like it is no longer sufficient to be a 'clever student' like she and the other participants had identified themselves

as since youth. This example can be interpreted as how the 'shock of the elite' (Reay et al. 2009) Nina, many of the other participants experienced upon enrolling at the University of Oslo, not only affected their experiences *at* university, but also their future aspirations.

Moreover, it is worth noting the salient class consciousness in the above example. The idea that a habitus in an 'awkward social position' inflicts actors to 'keep watch on themselves' (Bourdieu 2000) can shed light on the type of social hyperawareness displayed in Nina's story. Nina is connecting her loss of motivation to pursue a PhD to not having the right social background for this kind of work. One way to understand this is that tensions in habitus, experienced as misfit, can work to spur *self-exclusion* from certain types of aspirations. For instance, that the leap from a rural non-academic community and family to a PhD-position in the humanities *appears* too wide. The example highlights how habitus acts as a 'structuring structure' (Bourdieu 1990). The dynamics behind such lived experiences of self-excluding from a certain career of environment despite a *want* to belong, could be a topic for further research. However, I took note of how factors like help from cultural guides, growing confidence and previous middle-class exposure – that I connected to Per, Morten and Vildes stories of being 'caught by the game' (Bourdieu 1998) and developing PhD-aspirations - was absent in Nina's interview. Overall, this example illustrates how the first-generation studnets negotiated between the opportunity to continue pursuing their academic interests, and their future responsibilities – that revolved around material security. What did Nina and the other first-generation students that oriented themselves toward work outside of academe, see themselves doing, and their futures to be like?

Going for a 'master worthy job'

At the beginning of this chapter, I demonstrated how future wants and needs – interests and responsibilities – was a considerable topic in the first-generation students' interviews. One group of students appeared to have become immersed into the academic 'game' (Bourdieu 1990) – aspiring to turn their intellectual interest into work. The other group spoke in terms of going for 'master worthy jobs' – like Maria called it – outside of academe. By this she referred to jobs that required a master's degree to apply. For two of the students, Nina and Siv, this looked like *planning* to become high school teachers, and for Maria, Siri and Lise this looked like *hoping* to attain relevant work post-graduation.

'Becoming a teacher instead'

In the previous chapter argued the first-generation students desire for knowledge and their pursuit of a long education in a discipline study like the humanities could indicate a change in habitus: shifting away from the utilitarian orientation towards education that appeared be embedded in their primary habitus. Interestingly, a few students spoke in terms of *retreating* to this kind of utilitarian thinking around education. This was the case with Nina and Siv. At various points during their time at Blindern, both figured that they "wanted to become a teacher instead" like Siv expressed it. Nina said she had been discouraged from applying for a PhD much because she felt she had "harder and longer road to walk" – in comparison to the confident other – due to her non-academic background. Siv, on the other hand did not have a specific aspiration she decided *not* to pursue. Her story of deciding to become a teacher "instead" revolved around how she felt like "she had gotten herself into something she was not fit for" by enrolling in Blindern's bachelor program for Political science. Elaborating on her sense of misfit in this environment, and her decision to switch to the History programme, she said:

> I sort of got really caught up in the way 'everyone else' was heading for [jobs] in the Foreign Ministry and becoming ambassadors, or work in NGOs or stuff like that. And then I saw that: 'this is not me: now I have gotten myself into something that I am not fit for.' And then I figured out that I feel a lot more comfortable with history [and the people there] and that I wanted to be a teacher instead (Siv, History).

It is nothing noteworthy about switching programs in and of itself. This can reflect regular process of students' figuring out what they want to pursue in terms of education and work. Many of the first-generation students had switched between programs, universities, countries and years of work before enrolling in various masters' programs at Blindern. However, I took note of how Siv's choice was guided by a sense of social misfit in the program, and not a dislike for the subject itself. Lowered career ambitions and the apparent lack of "harsh" debating culture was central in Siv's narration as to why she felt more at home in the History program. She did not see herself as a person who could work as an ambassador and the like. Again, there are elite tendencies – and comparison to the confident other – that make up the backdrop to the sense of misfit Siv, and other studnets, experienced. This is another example of how the first-generation students' educational experiences at university worked to shape and reshape their future aspirations. The above example illustrates how both Nina and Siv were *rerouting to profession competency* which, like they themselves did, I connected to their sense of misfit in

Blinders driven environment with elite tendencies. They were planning to become teachers by building on their humanities degrees with a one-year unit in pedagogy.

Becoming a teacher was something many of the first-generation students mentioned as having considered or thought of. Morten, for instance, had a brief time in a teaching program before being encouraged by a professor to pursue History. And Vilde talked about how her parents had not been able to relate to her stress over what program to choose as they had seemed to "expect" that she would become a teacher "anyways." Oftentimes talk of going into the teaching profession was mentioned while the first-generation students reflected upon what Ingrid called "secure" and "insecure" educational choices. When I asked her about how she saw her own choice of orienting herself towards as job in Oslo's cultural scene, she replied:

> Yes, that is something I think about very often. Umm... A few times I've been thinking a bit like: 'Should have chosen differently? Should I have become a teacher, for instance?' But no, for the most part I am quite happy with my choices (Ingrid, Art History).

The idea of becoming a teacher came to symbolize a safe, responsible, educational choice. One in which it was possible to conduct knowledge work *and* have access to the security associated with *becoming something.* As can be seen above, it varied among the first-generation students the degree to which they were comfortable with having chosen an education that did not lead to anything specific. For Ingrid, this felt right.

'Competing loyalties'

Other students, like Siv and Nina deemed it important to achieve a degree of *predictability* in terms of their futures. Interestingly, this aligned with their parents' orientations towards education. Nina spoke in terms of her father having endorsed her plan to become a teacher:

> I think he was just thinking that is it good to take a path in which you are secured a job, matter-of-factly (Nina, English Literature).

Choosing to become a teacher then, can be understood as placing responsibilities over interests. However, there was a sense of *ambivalence* underneath most of the first-generation students' stories of legitimizing their "insecure" educational choices, the potential to continue pursuing their academic interests and the possible career opportunities associated with their master's degrees in the humanities. Although I was under the impression that Siv was settled with her "wanting to become a teacher instead" like she put it early in our interview, she revealed towards the end that she "would have loved to work in a museum" as a curator related to her field or interest – ancient history. At the time of the interview, she did not see this as a viable

option and admitted that she "actually feel a bit stuck" with her history degree. I argue that the students display of ambivalence and feeling drawn between interest and responsibilities can be understood as an expression of *split habitus* (Bourdieu 1999; 2007). The characteristic of a split habitus is a feeling of being torn between 'competing loyalties' (Reay 2015) – or new and old aspects of self. In the previous chapter I suggested that the first-generation studnets regard for intrinsic aspects of education, in the form of learning for its own sake, represented a new aspect of self. Or that going to university allowed this aspect of self to come into its own, like in the case of Nina and Ingrid who displayed an early orientation towards middle-class academic dispositions. Looking ahead, towards post-graduation life, these new aspects of self, are challenged by their need to make responsible choices. Most students probably are concerned with securing a relevant job after graduating. However, I suggest that the students embodied orientation towards education as a means to become something – their old aspects of self – is brought to the forefront while considering the job opportunities of an educational choice guided by interest and not future responsibilities. Considering how habitus is thought to work "on the premises established in the previous state" Nina and Siv's choice to become teachers, while recognizing that they could have liked to conduct research, or work in a museum, can be understood as a preconscious 'strategy' (Bourdieu 1990) working to restore a sense of unity in habitus.

Hopes, anxiety and pessimism

It has been argued that 'powerful emotions' (Reay 2015) is implicit in the notion of split habitus. The idea behind this is that split habitus produce an internal conflict out of being torn between different interests. Which in turn can spur a 'double perception of self' (Bourdieu 1999). There was some evidence of these kinds of strong emotions that I connected to the first-generation students concern for future career opportunities with a humanities degree and the "practical thinking" they were ingrained with from home. A few students displayed a considerable about of anxiety, pessimism and even regret over their educational choices and the perceived career opportunities. Maria had a clear story of having chosen course of study based on her intellectual interests:

> I thought three years [to attain a bachelor's degree] was an enormous amount of time... And like: 'then I must study something I like.' And I thought religion was fun, and then I fell for [a program of] religious history (Maria, Philosophy).

Note how "fun" appeared as a primary driver in Marias story of choosing a bachelor's degree program. Considering this, there is a certain irony in the way she, as a master student, engaged in a gentle mockery of the confident other in her program that appeared to "study for fun" like I demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter. She appeared to have turned increasingly *anxious* about where her degree in Philosophy could take her. At one point she exclaimed: "I think my future is so unsure!" The possible future a law degree could have offered her represented a basis for comparing to her present situation: "I wish that I had just thought more *practical* and [just studied something] that secures a good job, lots of money and a secure future." This line of thinking resembles the way Ingrid said she reflected upon is she should have chosen something more practical, than art history, and become a teacher. The first-generation students' *comparison* of their study choices up against the utilitarian, practical, or responsible orientation toward education they were used to from home was a consistent finding. I suggest that this measuring of their choices towards life at home can be reflective of a development of a 'double perception of self' (Bourdieu 1999) characteristic of split habitus. One side of sees the educational choices through a utilitarian, or practical, frame of mind; whereas the other side perceives through an intrinsic lens in which interests ought to be a primary driver. Nearing the end of our interview Maria offered a preliminary conclusion on the question of future aspirations: "So, I really *hope* I get a master worthy job." Siri was in a similar place. She said she was "unsure what to do" but that she "hoped" that a master's degree on her CV would get her a suitable job.

Lise on the other hand appeared increasingly *pessimistic* about the opportunity to obtain relevant work with a degree in linguistics at all:

> **Juni:** Okay, so you don't really see it as compatible [to apply your education in a job?]
>
> **Lise:** Noo, I guess I don't... when I comes down to it.
>
> **Juni:** What do you think about that?
>
> **Lise:** No, um... It is actually okay... I don't think I actually have studied to... Na, it is actually okay.
>
> **Juni:** Yeah? You don't think you have studied 'actually' as a consideration of work? Or?
>
> **Lise:** Like, I did, or like, I wanted to. But I didn't have anything concrete, I don't quite get it... I must have had an idea of... When I think about it was really, really important that I had to, um, manage to get a bachelors degree. […] But then I think that it, um, in a way had to more to do with being that type of person that makes it, rather than reaching a specific [career] goal.

There are many individual factors that could have contributed to the kind of pessimistic perception of job prospects displayed in the above example. Various health concerns, for

instance, can play a role. Still, it is striking that Lise seems to settle on the idea that it is "actually okey" to obtain a master's degree without believing it would lead to a master worthy job. Instead, she pictured working various part time jobs. What was underneath this pessimistic, almost defeated, view of job prospects with a humanities degree? I connected Lises bleak view of future job prospects to a later reflection where she distinguished between the "type of people" that conduct "these jobs that are so-called, *important"* and "her type of people." Possibly, a tension in habitus – in the form of seeing themselves as contrast to the "type of people" that conduct jobs associated with having a long education – could affect the first-generation students' future aspirations. Such a dynamic also mirrors the widespread self-comparison many the first-generation student made to the confident other, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Interestingly, however, Lise brought up that she deemed her educational efforts to be just as much about "being that type of person that makes it" than it was about reaching specific career goals. In the next chapter I will investigate how talk of wanting "something more" (Morten) or to be "that type of person" (Lise) were important undercurrents in the humanities students' stories of going to university as the first in their families and their construction of middle-class identities.

Summary

In this chapter, I have considered how the first-generation students' future aspirations can be understood as shaped and reshaped by experiences as newcomers in the academic field. The negotiation between the want to continue pursuing academic *interest* – which represented a perceived way to prolong *the fun of studying* – and the need to conduct *responsible* post-graduation made up the backbone of this chapter. I argued that a conflict, in the form of the 'competing loyalties' (Reay 2015) associated with *split habitus,* undergirded this negotiation. The utilitarian, or responsible, orientation towards education represented *old* aspects of self, whereas the want for future work to revolve around personal academic interest could be said to reflect *new* aspects of self. Through this scope, I focused on a variation in the sample between those who oriented themselves towards potential work in academe, and those who considered 'master worthy' options outsider of academe. I took note of how 1) *belief in own academic potential,* 2) *validations from professors,* and 3) *previous middle-class exposure* stood out as common denominators in the stories of the students aspiring to continue pursuing their academic interests through doctorate work. Moreover, I discussed an example of potential *self-exclusion* from PhD- aspiration connected to perceptions of class-based disadvantages. Lastly,

I analyzed some of the characteristics of that stood out in the of *wanting to become a teacher instead* and *hoping to attain a 'master worthy job.'*

Chapter 6: Invested in Becoming *Someone*

In this chapter, I investigate some of the ways in which the construction of middle-class identities – in light of tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus – were reflected in the first-generation students' stories. Here, I focus on the how pursuing a master's degree in the humanities can be understood as an investment in becoming *someone* – or also, a quest for *respectability* (Skeggs 1997). This represented a contrast to the thinking that education ought to result in becoming *something*, like demonstrated in the first analysis chapter. Moreover, I explored how what can be understood as changes in habitus by means of undertaking higher education as the first in their families evoked a sense of *feeling like middle-class.* The undercurrents to what the first-generation students meant by "wanting to be that type of person" – who is highly educated – make up the starting point of this chapter.

Wanting to be 'that type of person'

Counting themselves in the ranks of highly educated people was important for many of the first-generation students. Recall the gloomy state Lise was in concerning the future application of her linguistics degree. Like the other students she was motivated to pursue her interests in writing and languages. However, she was also motivated to pursue higher education as felt she "was not getting anywhere" in the manual *unskilled*, often seasonal part-time work, she conducted for several years prior to university. Nearing the end of her studies she appeared to doubt if her humanities degree would lead to anything more than *skilled* part-time work and temporary work. I took note on how Lise seemed to *redefine* her story to be as much about "being that type of person" who completes higher education as it was about desire for knowledge or achieving upward mobility in the form of shifting away from working-class type of jobs. While this clear redefinition of motivation stood out in the material, Lise was not alone in *wanting to be "*that type of person". A notable example was the way Nina pushed through and said she received an A on her thesis in the midst of the "rough times" as a master student at Blindern, described in the previous chapter. On the verge of applying for a leave of absence to "regain" her motivation, she mustered up the drive to continue. She said:

> But then I figured that: 'No, I am not the kind of person that just give up and quit – that it not for me. I am not like that. And I can grit my teeth and do stuff even if it sucks.' So yeah, I just committed to that goal and finished [my thesis] (Nina, English Literature).

While Nina gradually let go of her aspiration to pursue a PhD, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, she did not see herself as a "person that just give up and quit." Several students displayed a similar type of *grit* and *determination.* Maria also talked about loss of motivation and how she had difficulty completing her bachelor's thesis in religion. Academic insecurity, a feeling of being alone, and limited support from supervisors were some of the factors Maria connected to her challenges. But after several years delay, she decided to herself: "I *am* going to have that degree!" and finished, before starting the master's in philosophy at Blindern the upcoming fall. The first-generation students' dedication to overcome insecurity and misfit in order to be 'that type of person' bears resemblance to the "almost superhuman levels of motivation, resilience and determination" that had been described in a group of first-generation students at a British elite university (Reay et al. 1115). However, I do not wish to contribute here to the perception that upward mobility can be achieved by individualistic efforts like grit, hard work or immense motivation. Rather, I read out of the first-generation students' stories considerable investment in the *respectability* (Skeggs 1997) that comes with being the type of person that is highly educated.

Master's degree = 'accomplished'

Comparison to the confident other was also evident in the first-generation students' reflections upon the *status* associated with cultural capital and higher education. Morten explained how he was "always hesitant" to admit that it was, in fact, historically inspired video games – or "*gaming*" – that was the true source of his interest in history. With a nod to the confident other, he said: "It sounds a lot more 'romantic' to say, 'I've read a lot of history *books*, and that got me interested." I interpreted this example of a sense of *shame* associated with lack of cultural capital deemed important in the academic field – to be *well read.* The way Morten felt like he wanted to *hide* aspects of his personal biography as a *means* to *fit in* resonates with how American, first-generation, law students, has been found to *conceal* aspects of their working-class identities (Granfield 1991). This example illustrates how the first-generation students saw parts of their identities, or personal stories, as a *conflict* to be regarded as a respectable person. A similar experience was visible in Maria's interview. Unlike the other students in the sample, her upbringing in Oslo meant her high school were more diverse in terms of the pupil's class background. Based on her descriptions of the type of high school she went to, it seemed like she was surrounded by friends and peers that had middle-class backgrounds. Comparing herself to the confident other from high school – whom she perceived "to have achieved so much" –

made her feel "a bit like a failure." The extra years she has spent completing her bachelors and the uncertainty she associates with her choice of study factored into this *negative* perception of self. Reflecting upon this, she said:

> But then again, I'm thinking that in two years – *if* I have my master's degree – then... It will make me feel 'accomplished' in a way. And then I will probably not think about how hard it was, or that kind of stuff... (Maria, Philosophy, emphasis added).

This example illustrates how higher education represented a way for the first-generation students to feel like *accomplished*, respectable people. That is, *if* they complete their master's degrees. While most seemed quite determined to do so, like in the above example with Nina, the type of slight doubt expressed by Maria can be understood as a reflection of them being a newcomer to the field: completing a master's degree is not something all took 'for granted' (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). This also fits with the way some students described how friends or family reacted with a certain *awe* over undertaking the project of pursuing a master's degree. Like Siv, who said she had experienced people from home saying that "it is impressive that you are doing a masters." While difficult to say, it seems unlikely to be met with this kind of reaction in a social environment in which pursuing a master's degree is the norm, rather than an anomaly – like it was in the case of the first-generation students in this sample. Considering how pursuing a higher education was not something the students, or their home surroundings took for granted, or expected, it was a means to set them self apart and achieve a form of respectability otherwise not accessible to them. At home, education was oriented toward becoming *something.* In contrast, the first-generation students concern could be said to revolve around becoming *someone.* As demonstrated throughout the analysis, this was something they were willing to invest considerable amounts of emotional, energetic and financial expenses towards.

A quest for 'something more'

The first-generation student's investment in achieving respectability can be understood as a form of work to *construct middle-class identities* for themselves. They wanted to be highly educated. Another facet of the first-generation student's identity work was talk about what they did *not* want to be like, and to work with. Like demonstrated in the previous chapter, the first-generation students' stories of future aspirations were characterized by ambivalence and insecurity. In contrast, they spoke with much clarity about what they did not want their futures to entail. They said things like: "I did not just want to be an electrician for the rest of my life"

(Morten), "I never had it in me to become a farmer" (Nina), "I did not want to go the vocational route" and "work an 8-4 job (Per), "to continue in retail was not really an option" (Vilde), "I could see that I was not getting anywhere with the types of jobs I was working" (Lise), "all of a sudden, every day at the office became the same" (Siri). These statements reveal the first-generation students' proximity to the working-classes. Moreover, it signifies how they perceive life at home to be *limited* (Curl et al. 2018; Lehman 2013). By flipping their statements and examining the hypothetical future they wished '*to escape'* (Mallman 2014: 31) the limitation they experienced is accentuated: Morten could have spent the rest of his life as an electrician and perhaps not discovered "his academic potential." Nina could have taken over her parent's farm and missed out on the urban life she desired. Per could have gone the vocational route and *become* a carpenter, like his father and brother. Vilde could have stayed in retail, like her mother. Lise could have continued taking on different part time and seasonal unskilled jobs that was "not leading anywhere." Siri could have stayed in her clerical position and made peace with how every day became more and more alike. A common denominator in these statements, and across the first-generation students' interviews, was that they *"wanted something more"* – like Morten expressed it – than what the perceived to be available for them *at* home.[32]

'Don't like the thought of an '8-4 job'

All the students had first- or second-hand experiences with working-class type of jobs. Except for Morten, who had worked as a certified electrician, many of the other students had experiences with unskilled labor. This included, but were not limited to janitor, personal care assistant, assembly line, warehouse, retail, elderly home, kindergarten, and clerical work. Prolonged, embodied, knowledges of working-class type of jobs resemble a description of how first-generation students at a British elite school typically had experience with "minimum wage jobs" and thus awareness of "what these jobs entailed" (Aries and Seider 2005: 437). While the students in the present study had nuanced descriptions of these work experiences, it was aspects that can be characterized as *negative* that evoked a sense of "wanting something more."

[32] To one student, Maria, "something more" meant feeling like she "had enough" in terms of money. Descriptions of an upbringing with limited means and periods of poverty was the backdrop to the economic, or *material,* motives behind the way Maria saw higher education as a means to secure a form of financial stability she had not grown up with. However, overall, economic rationale for pursing higher education was strikingly absent in most of the other interviews.

Siri framed her experienced conducting routine clerical work for a medium sized sales company after completing her bachelor in the following way:

> Suddenly everyday becomes the same, one after another, again and again and again, and you sort of know everything [familiar with all the tasks], and then I actually started to become a bit restless (Siri, history student, transcription, p. 8).

Another example is the way Lise spoke of her brief period working in an assembly putting stickers on soap dispensers, as "very boring." The way these students describe their experience with manual labor, or the "*8-4 workday*" as Per and Morten phrased it, resonates with Marx' classical notion of *alienation* (Milligan 1988, translation of Marx and Engels 1844). The way these students mentioned negative work experience while talking about their motivation to pursue, or return to, higher education was characteristic of many of the participants. Higher education as an alternative to working-class type of jobs, was particularly evident in Per's interview. He felt strongly about not wanting to pursue vocational training like his father and brother, and the life he saw this to entail:

> And that I can say – sorry – but I can say that [the thought of '8-4 jobs'] helps me think that I wanted to go the academic route. 'Cause I didn't want to do vocational training and have that type of job… I didn't think the people… the work environment, I didn't really think that it was something for me… It was a bit like that, actually (Per, p. 8).

Per's reflections upon his experiences packing and organizing stock in a warehouse as a summer job in his youth further illustrates his distaste for manual labour:

> I thought [the warehouse job] was better [than the janitor job] but I never liked doing it. Because I think arriving at a job at eight in the morning, every day, five days a week, and go home around three – four, and then being asked to do extra hours, and just *work* all day, right – you must hang in there and stuff - I just thought it was absolutely terrible (Per, p. 8).

Note the ambivalence in Per's reflections upon why he does not want an 8-4 job: he immediately excised himself by saying 'sorry' for not finding vocational work rewarding and suitable. Many of the students were caught in a similar type of ambivalent state: on the one side they did not want to speak down on where they came from, and on the other, distancing themselves from the limitations at home was central to their construction of middle-class identities. This accords with how it has been suggested that narratives of strong personal drive towards mobility can be a way for first-generation students to describe how they have "improved themselves" in comparison to their working-class home environments (Lehmann 2013:12). Following Lehmann (2013) I suggest that there are "no malicious intent in these narratives." Rather, it can be understood as part of the first-generation students meaning

making about having chosen a path that diverges from the norm at home. Illustrated here by the way Per depicted himself as a person that *did not fit in* with the people and work environment, he knew from manual labor jobs. Several students had had a similar sense of not fitting into working-class type of jobs. Recall how Nina said she "did not have a farmer" in her. And the way Vilde said retail work was out of the question. These stories bear resemblance to the way a qualitative study of children of Norwegian second-generation students in vocational training have been found to speak of a desire to "move beyond" their current educational status (Ljunggren and Orupabo 2020). Ljunggren and Orupabo argues that this desire to "move beyond" is a quest for respectability stated in the negative by being "centred around the type of persons they do not want to be – those on a path to working-class occupations (2020: 713). This flipped take on respectability fits well with the first-generation student's desire for "something more" and their depictions of who they did not want to be.

'Freedom' and 'enjoyable' work

Some students saw middle-class type of jobs as a way to obtain the kind of *freedom* they did not experience in the working-class jobs they had first- or secondhand experience with. This was perhaps most evident in the stories of the students who were aspiring towards applying for a PhD-position after completing their master's degrees. Morten had thought about this:

> So, I like to picture that I can be a bit self-reliant and that I don't necessarily have to work directly *under* someone […] That's why a research job seems quite attractive as well – because I under the impression that you come and go as you like, or more like you *need.* And that is a form of *freedom* I like. I don't like the thought about an 8-4 job. I have tried that for two years, and that was "okay" [negatively laden]. (Morten, History, emphasis added).

Here, "a research job" is pictured as the *opposite* of the manual labor job Morten and several of the other first-generation students had experience with. Worth noting is the stress on not wanting to work "*under* someone." In comparison to being told what tasks to complete by a boss, the students wanted to have a larger degree of freedom to decide what to work with, when and so on. This is the kind of liberty Morten is "under the impression" that is possible to achieve if he were to attain a PhD-position and possibly have a career in academe. Freedom *from* restraints and limitation associated with the working-class jobs and lives at home, was also a topic in Siri's interview. She was one of the students that "hoped" for a 'master worthy job'. Towards the end of our interview, she said:

> Anyway, my hope is that I perhaps don't need to be reliant upon a job, and that it is something that I can rather to because I enjoy it… actually (Siri, History student).

From the way I understood Siri, this reflection did not mean she did not want to be reliant upon working at all. But rather, upon work like the routine clerical job she had for several year between her bachelors and master. A job in which she had started to feel "restless" and like the days had started to become more and more alike. Instead, the first-generation students wanted jobs they could *enjoy*. They spoke about wanting to work in museums and libraries, and as editors, researchers, consultants. Maria said she really wants to "work with knowledge and stuff." In contrast, talk of routine and manual work, or the 8-4 day, as several referred to it, came to *symbolize* the type of work the students did not want for themselves. I connected the first-generation students want to become *knowledge workers* to the *fun* they were having with the studies, and the desire for knowledge that drew them to the humanities in the first place. Their ideal jobs can be said to indicate an aspiration towards becoming part of the academic-middle class. Membership in which came symbolize a form of freedom the first-generation students did not see as attainable in their home environment.

The 'class-question'

During the interviews, I never brough up social class unless the students themselves were to bring it up. It was their experiences as the *first* in their families to go to university, and not that of a person with a specific class background, that were the focus of the interviews. However, at the end of the interviews I asked five structured questions aimed at obtaining comparable, descriptive, data on the structural and material factors of the participants lives. In addition to parents educational and occupational status, and the families "financial situation," I asked the students to first put their family's class background into words, and then their own. Several of the participants found this question difficult. Many pointed out their present position as students and that they "don't know what [they] will end up doing" (Per). A somewhat similar reflection on the uncertainty of the future social positioning was visible in Siri's answer to "the class question". She recognized her parents as "working-class" and saw herself in the following terms:

> **Siri:** Ehm, no, I don't really know… um… […] but I feel like […] I have lots with me from home that I regard highly. But also, lots from university… which I guess is a middle-class tradition – in my life. But it's not like I can [considerable pause], it's not like I can say that I am a 'class' – what's it called when you 'climb in class?
>
> **Juni:** Doing a 'class journey'?

> **Siri:** Yeah, I can't really see that I have done one – its been a really still standing journey, in case. But yeah, in a way I have parted with where I came from, though. (Siri, History).

The *tentativeness* of the first-generation student's social position is evident in these examples. While their intellectual interests, educational choice and future aspirations are pointing toward a position in the academic middle-classes, they have not yet achieved upward mobility in objective terms. They are "between classes." To Siri, this ambivalent positioning was expressed by how she felt like she had "left what she came" from but could not see herself as having experienced the *upward momentum* she pictured "class journeys" to be about. For now, Siri and the other first-generation students are left in a position where they have ballast both from home and from the academic "middle-class tradition" they were introduced to at university.

Feeling like middle-class

An objective anchor in the academic middle-classes represented a future *possibility* for the first-generation students at the time of the interviews. At the same time, they spoke about how going to university had made them *different* from their home environments. In the first analysis chapter, for instance, I highlighted how many felt their academic middle-class interests in the humanities represented "a stark contrast" to home – like Morten phrased it. Sometimes, it was not so much concrete aspects of going to university the first-generation students highlighted, but rather a *vague* sense of having undergone a form of social transformation. Lise's answer to 'the class question' in the structured part of my interviews, was indicative of an elusive form of social alteration based in attainment of education:

> I think I would have placed myself in the middle-classes – even if I'm more broke now than my parents have ever been – so then maybe it has something to do with, um... *other factors*. Naa, I actually don't know... Well, yes, no, I'm going for middle-class (Lise, p. 14, emphasis added).

In accordance with research on class subjectivities, Lise's initial reaction to the class question was one determining social standing based on economic factors (Harrits and Pedersen 2018). However, as economic situation could not capture how going to university induced a feeling of no longer being "working-class" – like she perceived her parents to be – Lise drew on an alternative explanation in the form of looking towards "other factors." I suggest that these "other factors" can be understood as an expression of having acquired 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1984; see also Lareau and Weininger 2003) specific to the academic field throughout their time in higher education. Nina was also concerned with this. At one point in the interview,

she made explicit how she saw higher education as a means to accrue "cultural capital." A bit later in the interview, I followed up on this reflection:

> **Juni:** […] Earlier you mentioned the term 'cultural capital' - which is very sociological in a way – but do you have any more thought around that?
>
> **Nina:** Umm... yeah, I guess it is that I've always felt a bit different from my parents. And perhaps rather looked up to my teachers – at least in high school […]. To be able to know things, have knowledge about stuff - that's probably always been important to me. And it probably became more and more important [progressing throught the university]. So, like, to be well-read, have insight into cultural currents in society. Um, be reflected and stuff. Those are values I regard quite highly (Nina, English Literature).

While such explicit talk of self-association with middle-class values like knowledgeability and insights on cultural matters was reflective of the sample as a whole, there were a few other participants that spoke in similar terms. As pointed out before I connected the first-generation studnets making overt their taste for orientations associated with the academic middle-class tradition to them being *newcomers* to the field. Widespread knowledgeability on societal cultural currents, to be well-read and reflected in general, was not something the students took for granted. Drawing on Bourdieu's fish-in-the-water analogy (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127) we could say that the first-generation students *were* feeling the weight of the academic "water." The dual process of *drawing boundaries* to people at home and the *embrace* of academic values can be understood as work to construct middle-class identities – in which the respectability of 'cultural capital' was central. But also, the *distancing* to typical working-class type of work many engaged in by indicating that they "wanted something more." A similar pattern dynamic of "association" with the middle-classes and "distancing" to the working-classes in the process of becoming middle-class has been described by Kaufman (2003). However, in line with Reay and colleagues (2009) I suggest that the first-generation students in this sample "displayed the ability to successfully move across two very different fields, combining strong connections and loyalties to family and home friends with what are seen to be classically middle-class academic dispositions" (1105). Many displayed sensitivity towards different ways of relating to knowledge and the world more generally between home and university. For instance, Per said it is important "to be apprehensible" while interacting with family – as to not "speak academic" over their heads. Moreover, there was much talk about calling, visiting and engaing with family.

However, regardless of this awareness and frequent contact, several students expressed "being frustrated" (Per) of the limited understanding of university and studnets life they experienced

family to have. The way Per said he felt like he had "less and less in common with his family" as he progressed throught his studies applied to several students. It indicates the profound transformation they experienced throught undertaking higher education as the first in their families. However, a few students were more sceptical about the academic field. Siv for instance, was determined that she was "moving back to the countryside as soon as she had turned her degree in." This illustrates how the first-generation students did not engage in a wholesale aligmenent with the urban and academic world they had become part of as humanities studnets at an old and prestigious university. Yet, considering the interview material as a whole, I am suggesting that the "other factors" Lise spoke of and that evoked a sense of being different from home, contributed to making the first-generation students *feel* like middle-class. While they were still *between* classes, this altered class subjectivity could be reflective of a change in habitus. The middle-class tradition of university had provided a new point of reference to the first-generation students. One that worked to 'structure [their] perceptions' and 'actions' – which Bourdieu (1998: 81) suggested is a key working of habitus – in the fields they move in and across.

Summary

In this chapter I have considered how the first-generation students emotional, energetic and investments towards the pursuit of a master's degree in the humanities represented *a question of identity* – of whom the first-generation students wanted to be as persons. I suggested that a quest for *respectability* (Skeggs 1997) could be understood as an undercurrent to the atypical educational choice the first-generation students had made – considering their social class backgrounds. Talk of *wanting to be that type of person, wanting something more,* and *don't liking the thought of 8-4 jobs* were some of the ways a desire for respectability was reflected in the first-generation students' stories. Seen together with the perception of self as having turned *different* from life and people at home, and the *embrace* of academic values like knowledgeability and scholarly reflection, I argued that the first-generation students engaged in the work of *constructing middle-class identities* for themselves. While many recognized the *tentativeness* of their current social position as master students their stories reflected a tendency that the participants had started to *feel like middle-class.*

7: Concluding remarks

In this thesis I have studied how social class, in its embodied form of habitus, can shape the experiences, -aspirations and identities of students who are the first in their family going to university. To achieve this, I employed the Bourdieusian notion of habitus to investigate how the first-generation students encounter with the academic field – as *newcomers* – spurred various forms of tensions, conflicts and changes in their internalized orientations and motivations. In what follows, I will detail the main finding of my study – under the heading "Middle-class in the making?" –before discussing its sociological and societal relevance.

Middle-class in the making?

How would the first-generation students' lives look like in five, ten or twenty years? Would their master's degrees in various humanities disciplines – given that they completed them – have led to academic middle-class positions? Would they *feel* like they had completed a proper class journey? It is too early in the participants social trajectory to draw conclusions on whether they will end up as part of the academic middle-classes or not. The aim of this study was not to analyze stories of class journeys from the perspective of an established position in the middle-classes. Rather, I focused on the concrete experiences nine humanities students had navigating university as the first in their families – coming from largely working-class backgrounds.

In this study I have demonstrated how the first-generation students' stories as *newcomers* to the academic field represented more than a direct quest to achieve upward social mobility. A strong *desire for knowledge* appeared to have drawn the first-generation students to the university, and to the humanities specifically. Starting higher education represented an opportunity to pursue their academic and intellectual interests. They frequently used to word *fun* to describe how they thought studying in and of itself were rewarding. Their high regard for the intrinsic aspects of education stood in stark contrast to depictions of their vocationally oriented home environments – in which education is mean to lead into *becoming something.* Considering this, I suggested that going to university "allowed aspects of self" – various expressions of their desire for knowledge – "to flourish for the first time" (Aries and Seider 2005: 433). By means of deciding to pursue the humanities – a discipline study not leading to something specific – the first-generation students had already conducted a social *transgression*

concerning the purpose of education. I connected this transgression – in the form of actively pursuing learning for its own sake – to the first-generation students' self-perception as 'clever' pupils in school – which set them apart as academically talented, or *special*, in their home environment. In line with Reay and colleagues (2009) I suggested that the first-generation students highly developed academic dispositions contributed to making them "familiar strangers" in the academic field.

However, while the first-generation students demonstrated a want to belong in an academic environment, I also found that their *newcomer* experience was characterized by social and academic insecurities. I proposed that these insecurities can be understood as *tensions* in habitus connected to the first-generation students' non-academic backgrounds. At the same time, I recognize how various insecurities associated with going to university, future aspirations, and the ways is which higher education factor into perception of self and others is something that could – and probably does – affect students of all backgrounds. Yet, based on the first-generation students' stories, I connected particular insecurities and sense of misfit to the encounter between their non-academic habitus and the academic field they became part of as humanities students. A central finding was that what appeared to many participants as a driven environment at campus Blindern – characterized by seemingly ambitious students and high academic expectations – spurred a sense of misfit, not in not in the academic field per se, but as a response to the elite tendencies. This resembled what has been described as working-class students' 'shock of the elite' (Reay et al. 2009). It was particularly the first-generation students encounter with students that *seemed* more familiar and intellectually capable that evoked negative sentiments, like a sense of *lack* and a 'crisis of confidence' (Reay et al. 2009) upon arriving at university – or while transitioning from bachelor level studies to master level.

While the first-generation students were drawn to university out of a desire for knowledge, their, *need* for a job was a considerable concern in the interviews. The students spoke of wanting to work in museums and libraries, and as editors, researchers, consultants, and teachers. Their ideal jobs are indicative of an aspiration to become part of the academic middle-classes: They wanted to *work with knowledge.* This represented a contrast to the manual labor traditions they had grown up in. However, another main finding in my study was the way there was a variation in the sample between orientation to work *inside* or *outside* of academe. I suggested that the first-generation student's sense of fit and misfit at university, and in Blindern's driven environment, contributed to the shaping, and reshaping, of their future aspirations. The first-generation students negotiated between their desire for knowledge and

their need for a job: between *interests* and *responsibility*. I argued that a *conflict* in habitus, characterized by 'competing loyalties' undergirded this negotiation process. The utilitarian, or responsible, orientation towards education represented old aspects or self, whereas the want of 'interesting' knowledge work – aligned with the academic middle-class tradition (Sakslind et al. 2018) – represented new aspects of self. I demonstrated how those who progressively oriented themselves toward work in academe could be said to be 'taken in and up by the game' (Bourdieu 1999) and that the group looking for other alternatives were oriented toward the attainment of 'master worthy' jobs. Moreover, I discussed how a perceived *class ceiling* (Laurison and Friedman 2015) and *self-exclusion* from aspirations to work in academe appeared connected to subjective experiences of class-based disadvantages.

As stated earlier, many of the first-generation students spoke of how education – in their home environments – was oriented towards becoming *something.* This was best illustrated by the way the participants reported that their pursuit of the humanities frequently spurred people at home to ask various versions of the "but what will you become"-question. Which came to symbolize different orientations towards the purpose of education between the first-generation student' home and the academic field. Where a long dicipline study in the humanities is not associated with becoming something specific, I suggested that the first-generation students' educational efforts and their emotional, energetic, and financial expenditure as degree seekers and *newcomers* to the academic field is indicative of their investment, not in becoming something, but *someone.*

Then, beyond the opportunity to engage their desire for knowledge, and the possibility of conducting knowledge work, higher education represented *a question of identity.* A question of whom the first-generation students wanted to be as persons. As such, the first-generation student's investment in being *the type of person* who succeeds in, and completes, higher education can be understood as a way for the first-generation students to achieve *respectability* (Skeggs 1997). Seen together with the perception of self as having turned *different* from life and people at home – especially in the form of talking like *not* wanting to conduct *8-4 jobs* – and the *embrace* of academic values like knowledgeability and scholarly reflection, I argued that the first-generation students engaged in the work of *constructing middle-class identities* for themselves.

Between the *fun* of studying and insecurities connected to being a newcomer in an academic field with elite tendencies, negotiating desire for knowledge and future responsibilities, and

balancing quest for respectability with retainment of old aspects of self and respect for their origins, the first-generation students started to *feel* like middle-class while still at university. Where their humanities degrees will take them in terms of achieved, or objective, class position is still an open question. A tentativeness many students themselves recognized.

Theoretical reflection

Identifying and analyzing tensions, conflicts and changes in habitus spurred by the first-generation students encounter with the academic field and the humanities provided a way to understand some of the particularities of being the first in one's family to undertake higher education in the context of Norway's oldest and most prestigious university. This Bourdieusian inspired theoretical framework centered around the interrelationship between habitus and field, allowed me to grasp the first-generation students sense of fit and misfit in the academic field, and the ways in which this brought on a shaping and reshaping of their future aspirations. Adding a psychosocial dimension to this study, inspired by Diane Reay (2005; 2015) allowed me to notice the affective nuances that characterized the first-generation students' experiences as newcomers to the academic field. Especially considering how this analytical gaze provided cuing of what the first-generation students "concerns" was and where in the data material the energy, ambivalence and tensions were made visible. I am under the impression that attention to a specter of emotions and affective states, ranging from fun, excitement, and passion, to insecurity, inferiority and anxiety allowed me to provide a deeper understanding of the first-generation student's educational experiences. Variations of this theoretical perspective – for example inclusive of an intersectional lens – could potentially also be applied in understanding other cases in which actors is exposed to new fields, or cultures, embedded in a social structure in which power is unevenly distributed.

Further questions

The question of first-generation students' educational experiences addresses the increasing concern for inclusivity and diversity in all parts of society – and particularly higher education and academe. While higher education in Norway is made available through free tuition and favorable governmental student loans and stipends educational inequalities do persist. And it has been demonstrated in a Norwegian context that academic success, measured by grades, increase from the bachelor to the master level (Hansen and Mastekaasa 2006). It is not a goal

that everyone should pursue higher education. However, more knowledge on how social class, particularly in its embodied form, can shape the educational experiences of students, could provide insight into how to create an inclusive and supportive environment for those who *want* to belong at university – like the students in my project.

In the introduction I highlighted the relative *invisibility* of the potential class-based disadvantages and subjective educational experiences of first-generation students in Norway. My study has contributed towards 'making visible' the stories of a group of first-generation master students in the humanities as an old and prestigious university. While attention to particularities of setting and program of study seem important to grasp first-generation students' experiences, this study is also shedding light on the potential challenges – such as academic insecurity and elite shock – that could also affect other first-generation students. However, to better understand more of how social class shape the experiences of first-generation students, more research is needed. I'm under the impression that it would be particularly valuable to investigate more of the experiences of first-generation students in studies associated with influential societal positions. Such as medicine, or law, which is known for stronger cultural codes, or dispositional traits, concerning style of dress, language, and mannerism. This could potentially provide insight into the lived dynamics contributing to social closure, reproduction, and mobility.

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All the sources used in this thesis have been listed.

Word count: 35 897

Appendix 1: Invitation to partake in study

Invitasjon til å delta i masterstudie om 'førstegenerasjonsstudenter'

Er du den første i din familie til å oppnå en høyere grad ved et universitet? En såkalt førstegenerasjonsstudent? Da vil jeg gjerne komme i kontakt med deg!

Jeg er en masterstudent i sosiologi som søker etter deltakere til en kvalitativ studie om hvordan det oppleves å være førstegenerasjonsstudent på masternivå på ulike programmer ved Humanistisk fakultet.

For å kvalifiser til å være med i studien må du altså:

a) være den første i din familie til å ha oppnådd en bachelorgrad

b) være fulltidsstudent på et masterprogram ved HF, eller ha fullført din mastergrad ved HF senest 2017

Kontakt meg på 957 28 249 eller junikl@student.sv.uio.no for å lære mer om studien eller for å avtale et intervju. Håper å høre fra deg!

Med vennlig hilsen,

Juni Katrine Lie

Appendix 2: Information letter and informed consent

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«Førstegenereasjonsstudenter ved Humanistisk fakultet» ?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan studenter, på masternivå, som er de første i sin familie til å ta utdanning, såkalt førstegenerasjonsstudenter, opplever akademia. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Som nevnt tar denne studien sikte på å undersøke hvordan førstegenerasjonsstudenter innenfor humanistiske fag opplever akademia. Studien ønsker også å si noe om hvordan studentene opplever sitt oppvekstmiljø sammenlignet med hverdagen som student og om det eventuelt er noe motsetningsforhold mellom disse to sosiale sfærene. Det er kun masterstudenter, eller personer som allerede har avlagt sin master de siste fire årene som vil bli intervjuet, totalt mellom 10 til 15 stykker. Studien danner datagrunnlaget for en masteroppgave i sosiologi.

Det er ønskelig at opplysningene som samles inn som en del av denne studien også kan brukes i en eventuell vitenskapelig artikkel som presenterer funnene.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Det er Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, i samarbeid med Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning, som er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet.

Professor Helene Aarseth er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du har fått denne invitasjonen til å delta fordi det er meg bekjent at du passer inn med utvalgskriteriet om å være en førstegenerasjonsstudent på masternivå innenfor et humanistisk fagområde. Jeg planlegger å spørre om lag 15 andre studenter med lignende profil om å delta i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar på et intervju som varer i 1 – 1,5 timer totalt. Intervjuet vil omhandle dine motivasjoner for studievalget, ditt oppvekstmiljø og

din studiehverdag. Det er ønskelig at lydopptak kan benyttes under intervjuene. Du vil også bli bedt om å fylle ut et kort spørreskjema som omhandler din sosioøkonomiske bakgrunn, for eksempel dine foreldres utdanningsbakgrunn, i etterkant.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Det er utelukkende meg som masterstudent, samt mine to veiledere, Helene Aarseth og Jørn Ljunggren som vil ha tilgang til opplysningene som samles inn som en del av dette prosjektet.

For å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysningene vil navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine erstattes med en kode som lagres på en egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data. Datamaterialet lagres på en sikker forskningsserver og aldri på privat datamaskin.

Du som deltaker vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i den endelige publikasjonen. Eventuelle gjenkjennbare opplysninger vil eventuelt skrives om for å sikre anonymitet.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 22. juni 2021. Alle opptak og personopplysninger slettes ved prosjektets slutt.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, samt Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning ved Helene Aarseth (helene.aarseth@stk.uio.no) eller masterstudent ved Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, Juni Katrine Lie (junikl@student.sv.uio.no, 957 28 249)
- Vårt personvernombud ved Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning er Liv Sæter (liv.sather@stk.uio.no)
- Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Helene Aarseth Juni Katrine Lie

(Forsker/veileder) (Student)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Førstegenerasjonsstudenters opplevelser som masterstudenter ved SV og HF», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i intervju

☐ å delta i muntlig spørreskjema

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Førstegenerasjonsstudenter på HF - Intervjuguide

Innledning og informasjon om prosjektet. Signering av informert samtykke.

Ta først utgangspunkt i det første spørsmålet og se hvor det leder. Følge opp med de andre spørsmålene hvis vi ikke kommer inn på disse temaene naturlig i intervjuet. Stikkordene er ment som forslag til temaer oppfølgingsspørsmålene kan ta for seg.

1. Kan du huske den første dagen din på Blindern? Hvordan vil du beskrive den første tiden som student?
2. Kan du beskrive en vanlig uke som masterstudent på ditt studieprogram?
3. Hvordan bestemte du deg for valg av studie?
4. Hva har vært din motivasjon for å ta høyere utdanning?
5. Hvordan ville du beskrevet familien din og stedet du vokste opp?
6. På hvilken måte skiller du deg fra, eller er lik, dine jevnaldrende fra oppveksten?
7. På hvilken måte er du opptatt av bakgrunnen din?
8. Hva ser du for deg å gjøre etter at du har fullført mastergraden? (Eventuelt: Hva planla du å gjøre med utdanningen din mens du gikk siste året på master?)

Stikkord:
- Tanker og følelser den første tiden som student
- Støttenettverk
- CV-bygging
- Relevant arbeid
- Jobb og fritid
- Positive og negative sider ved å være student
- Oppvekstmiljøet
- Bøker
- Søsken
- Forventninger fra andre
- Konserter/teater/museum
- Økonomi i oppvekst
- Foreldrenes yrke og utdanning
- Lærere
- Møte med medstudenter
- Venner

Appendix 4: Social background inquiry

Muntlige tilleggsspørsmål til informantene i etterkant av det ustrukturerte intervjuet.

1. Hva er dine foresattes høyeste utdanning?

2. Hva jobber dine foresatte med i dag? Har dette endret seg fra da du var barn?

3. Hvordan vil du beskrive økonomien til din familie i oppveksten?

4. Hvordan vil du beskrive din families klasseposisjon?