



**'My dad studied here too':  
Social inequalities and educational (dis)advantage in a Croatian  
higher education setting**

**Karin Doolan**  
**Darwin College**

October 2009

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

## **Declaration**

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. The length does not exceed the word limit as given by the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Education.

Karin Doolan  
October 2009

## Abstract

Higher education participation literature sends the message that there is social inequality in access to higher education and progress within it, i.e. that factors such as social class shape the chances of entering higher education, the choice of disciplinary orientation and course persistence. However, while there is general agreement in the field of sociology of education that social differences in educational pathways do not result solely from individual abilities, the sociological theorising of how such social differences are shaped is less consensual. This study contributes to the sociological debate by exploring how higher education choices are shaped for students from different social backgrounds in a Croatian higher education setting and how these students experience their first year of study and progress through it.

The study's data has resulted from a critical, multiple case study, mixed methods research design and includes: questionnaire data with responses from 642 first year undergraduate students at six case study faculties within the University of Zagreb; interview data collected from 28 students at the same six faculties whose first year educational experiences and progress were more closely examined; and statistical data including information for all Croatian students. The methodological relevance of the study derives from it being the first mixed methods study in Croatian higher education participation research and in providing the first qualitative data on the social aspects of student pathways in the Croatian higher education context. In addition, the study also contributes to overcoming the identified quantitative-qualitative divide in international higher education participation research.

Theoretically, the study has been inspired by Bourdieu's approach to structure and agency as interrelated, his critical conceptual 'toolbox' for understanding practice and his methodological pluralism. With regard to this conceptual 'toolbox', the study has engaged with Bourdieu's different types of capital, habitus and field in order to propose a relatively holistic approach to understanding social differences in higher education participation. His conceptual focus on the interrelatedness between habitus and field has provided this study with a sociologically relational account of student pathways rather than a focus on either their social, personal or institutional aspects. The study's exploration and extension of Bourdieu's concepts (e.g. capitals as acquired not just inherited, gradations of capital possession and gendered aspects of habitus) is a contribution to contemporary international debates on the usefulness and applicability of his framework for 'noticing' the ways in which social inequalities are educationally created and reinforced.

The study has identified an interrelated web of influences as shaping student choices and experiences: inherited or acquired capitals (cultural, social, economic and emotional), gender, and fields of the past (secondary education field), present (HE field) and future (labour market). The analysis indicates that institutional practices educationally reinforce social (dis)advantage through their (mis)recognition of resources which are unevenly distributed among students, thus positioning those with inherited capitals at an educational advantage. In this study, 'inheritors' were identified as second generation students, who had attended a secondary grammar school, with the necessary financial resources, supportive parents and appropriate living and studying conditions. In the case of students with low initial capitals, examples of transformative educational practices were related primarily to the fields they interacted with, which acted as sources of capital influencing their practices. However, it was more often the case that fields reinforced existing capitals rather than provided new ones.

A practical implication of identifying multiple influences shaping student choices and experiences is that a holistic approach is required to address such influences; just focusing on economic capital or cultural capital reveals only part of the inequalities puzzle. It is suggested that for the 'weakest to survive' an amalgam of different practices needs to be put into place in order to trump their disadvantaged position. To this extent, the study lists examples of such inclusive practices as identified in the research. These practices also contribute to a more complex verbalizing of the Bologna process' 'social dimension' in the Croatian HE context.

## Acknowledgements

For Virginia Woolf, 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' and money and writing space have also been a necessity for the development of this PhD thesis. In this sense, I am grateful to the Cambridge Overseas Trust, the Open Society Institute and the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports for financially supporting my studies.

This thesis has developed in many different locations where I would read, write, research, analyse and discuss: Frank Young House in Cambridge, faculty buildings in Zagreb, Brezovačka 21a in Novo Čiče, Lička 35 and Amruševa 8/II in Zagreb, London's Mile End, the LSE library, libraries in Cambridge and my supervisor's colourful office at MAB. During the course of the PhD, I have been supported in both direct and indirect ways by many people across these different locations.

I have benefited enormously from having Professor Diane Reay as my supervisor. Her detailed academic engagement with my research over the years has been such a valuable learning experience for me. I am indebted to her for providing me with consistent academic support, as well as for encouraging my confidence as a researcher and writer.

I would also like to thank Dr Darleen Opfer for showing an interest in my work, for providing me with valuable feedback and for her friendship throughout my PhD studies. Furthermore, my thanks go to Dr Clare Holdsworth for her useful comments on the 'Changing places' chapter of this thesis and to Dr Branislava Baranović for engaging with the study's Croatian perspective. My special thanks go to Professor Madeleine Arnot and Dr Domović for encouraging me to undertake this academic route, to Dr Flego for reinforcing it, as well as to colleagues at the Centre for Educational Research and Development in Zagreb who have been a constant source of support. I am also thankful to Professor Louise Archer and Professor Carole Leathwood for their useful feedback during the defence of this thesis.

This study would not have been possible without the 642 students who took the time to fill in the study's questionnaire, the 28 students who talked to me about their HE pathways, as well as the 7 lecturers who talked to me about their work. I am extremely grateful for their input and hope that their accounts have been represented in this thesis in a fair manner.

I have tried to symbolically acknowledge how important my friends have been to me during the course of my studies by using some of their names as pseudonyms for the students in my research. However, I would particularly like to thank Danči Dolenec, Mladen Domazet, Jelki Gruja, Matthew Papo Matić and Mare Radas Plasaj for being my 'safety net' and for their continuous stream of warm text messages, emails and words of encouragement.

My thanks also go to Son White, Jani Costas and Marko Velić who have shared Cambridge days with me and have become an important addition to my life. I am so happy to have seen all three of them complete their PhDs during my time here and I look forward to sharing new life adventures with them. I would especially like to thank Son for being such a wonderful friend over the last days of submission.

Bexy Christopoulou has followed my Cambridge days from the very beginning and her love and practical support cannot be thanked enough. I particularly thank her for all the times she cooked *κοτόπουλο* for me, for the times we ate salad and jaffa cakes together and talked about 'oti na nai' topics, for our plans to visit Jupiter and Mars, and for committing herself to 'forever b&f'. Thinking of us together makes me smile.

I would also like to thank my grandmother, Margaret Doolan, for all her enthusiasm over my PhD and for her financial 'perks' throughout my studies, as well as my brother-in-law Scott Coleman for his supportive words and for being such a great addition to the Doolan family.

Finally, to my Mamica, Dadikin and Majeni, three exceptional individuals whom I have the privilege to call my immediate family. Thank you for all your support in its many forms: for giving me a home I love to come back to, for engaging with my work, for providing me with emotional support at times of weakness and reinforcing my moments of strength, and for encouraging me to be curious about the world. I dedicate this thesis to you.

## **Acronyms used in the text**

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics, Republic of Croatia
DES	School of Design
EEC	Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing
FER	Croatian acronym for Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing
FG	First generation student
FTB	Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
MAT	Department of Mathematics
MED	Faculty of Medicine
MGO	Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil
MIOC	XV. Grammar school
MSES	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Republic of Croatia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SG	Second generation student

## Table of Contents

Declaration	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	3
Acronyms	4
List of Tables and Figures	8
<b>INTRODUCTION: ‘CROSSING THE LINE’, ‘TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE’</b>	<b>10</b>
About the study	11
Thesis overview	14
<b>PART 1 RESEARCHING HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAYS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Location, location, location – the research study in context</b>	<b>16</b>
Educational policy setting	17
Student profile	20
<b>Chapter 2 Studies on higher education participation</b>	<b>26</b>
Accessing and choosing a higher education course	26
Progress and non-completion	30
Influences of reviewed research on the study	35
<b>Chapter 3 Through a theoretical lens – Bourdieu’s conceptual tools</b>	<b>39</b>
Considering knowledge claims	39
Theoretical approaches	43
Tools of analysis – habitus, capitals and field	46
Conceptualising class	52
<b>Chapter 4 Study design</b>	<b>60</b>
Case study research	60
Choice of mixed methods	63
Data collection procedures	66
Questionnaire data	70
Interview data	74
Data quality	78
Research ethics	80
Reflexivity	82

<b>PART 2 STUDENT VOICES</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Chapter 5 'My dad studied here too'</b>	<b>86</b>
Parental influence	87
Parental support	91
On completed secondary schooling	96
Embodied culture	103
Cultural practices	106
<b>Chapter 6 Who you know counts</b>	<b>116</b>
Adults advising	117
Having 'a connection'	123
'The godfather'	125
Colleagues	127
Birds of a feather flock together?	134
<b>Chapter 7 The weight of costs</b>	<b>137</b>
(Un)restricted choice	138
Costs of study and progress	141
Distinctions	149
<b>Chapter 8 Changing places</b>	<b>154</b>
A room of one's own	155
Change of atmosphere	163
<b>Chapter 9 The playing fields</b>	<b>168</b>
The labour market effect	169
University positioning	175
'Pink' and 'blue' players: gender in the field	178
<b>Chapter 10 Inclusive and exclusive aspects of institutional habituses</b>	<b>190</b>
Securing a place	191
Course size and its effects	197
Communicating with teachers	201
Course content and its transmission	204
Assessment	211
Faculty resources and organisation	213
Educational status	215
Student characteristics	219

<b>PART 3 GETTING IN, GETTING ON AND GETTING OUT</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Chapter 11 Students' educational pathways</b>	<b>227</b>
Continuing to higher education – inertia and change	229
Choosing a university and course – (un)restrained?	236
Expectations and secondary schooling	241
Further aspects of institutional habitus	245
Lifestyle and employment	255
Possible outcomes	257
<b>CONCLUSION: SURVIVAL OF THE WEAKEST?</b>	<b>263</b>
Study implications: empirical and practical	264
Study implications: theory and policy	267
Study limitations and emerging themes for further research	271
A final note	273
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Appendix 1. Data on the composition of the Croatian student body by father's educational level and by gender</b>	<b>276</b>
1.1 Composition of the Croatian student body by father's educational level at academic study courses	
1.2 Composition of the Croatian student body by father's educational level at vocational study courses	
1.3 Composition of the Croatian student body by gender	
<b>Appendix 2. Correspondence regarding faculty access</b>	<b>278</b>
2.1 Content of letter requesting permission to research at the faculty	
<b>Appendix 3. Information about selected interview participants</b>	<b>280</b>
3.1 Selected students	
<b>Appendix 4. Interview consent form</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>Appendix 5. Interview schedules</b>	<b>283</b>
5.1 Interview schedule for first interview with students	
5.2 Interview schedule for second interview with students	
5.3 Interview schedule for interview with lecturers	
<b>Appendix 6. Final coding frame for student interviews</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Appendix 7. Student questionnaire</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>Appendix 8. The Croatian educational system</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Appendix 9. Summary of main findings</b>	<b>303</b>
Appendix 9.1 Summary of findings I	
Appendix 9.2 Summary of findings II	
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>305</b>

## List of Tables and Figures

Table	Page
1.1 <i>Total number of students in Croatian higher education (2001–2007) and students by father's educational level</i>	20
1.2 <i>Men in Croatia between the ages of 40-49 by educational level</i>	21
4.1 <i>Case study faculties and their retention rates</i>	63
4.2 <i>Summary of research stages</i>	70
4.3 <i>Questionnaire themes and items addressing them</i>	72
5.1 <i>Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study according to frequency of talking to parents about one's studies</i>	93
5.2 <i>Distribution of students according to faculty and type of completed secondary school</i>	98
5.3 <i>Distribution of students' expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study based on the type of secondary school they completed</i>	102
5.4 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their free time activities</i>	107
5.5 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their film tastes</i>	109
5.6 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their reading tastes</i>	109
5.7 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their music tastes</i>	110
5.8 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their family's ownership of cultural goods</i>	112
5.9 <i>Distribution of first and second generation students based on their estimation of financial status</i>	113
6.1 <i>Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students based on the extent to which certain people influenced their choice of course</i>	121
7.1 <i>The distribution of students' estimation of financial status and their expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study</i>	149
8.1 <i>Distribution of living arrangements according to estimated financial status</i>	160
8.2 <i>Students' reported satisfaction with their living conditions according to current living arrangement</i>	162
9.1 <i>Distribution of male and female students across case study faculties</i>	179
9.2 <i>Male and female students' estimations of the gender appropriateness of their courses</i>	181
10.1 <i>Characteristics of the case study faculties – an overview</i>	196
10.2 <i>Distribution of faculties based on whether their course was a first, second or third choice for enrolled students</i>	218
10.3 <i>Distribution of faculties based on whether their students recognise their enrolled course as giving them high social status</i>	219
10.4 <i>Distribution of students by parents' educational level across faculties</i>	220

<b>Figure</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.1	<i>Father's educational level – academic study courses</i>	22
1.2	<i>Father's educational level – vocational study courses</i>	22
1.3	<i>Gender composition of the student body</i>	24
5.1	<i>Reasons students quoted for why they continued to higher education</i>	89
5.2	<i>Reported frequency of talking to parents about particular topics</i>	106
5.3	<i>Percentage of students who indicated taking part in the listed free time activities 'often'</i>	107
5.4	<i>Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed films</i>	108
5.5	<i>Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed types of books</i>	109
5.6	<i>Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed types of music</i>	110
6.1	<i>Extent of people's influence on students' choice of HE course</i>	120
6.2	<i>The MGO 'Jump' event</i>	125
6.3	<i>Reported frequency of talking to friends about particular topics</i>	132
7.1	<i>Poster in the corridor leading to the School of Design</i>	153
8.1	<i>Lana's photograph of home</i>	164
8.2	<i>Lana's photograph of home</i>	164
8.3	<i>Katarina's photograph of the coast</i>	165
8.4	<i>'Me, where I belong'</i>	166
10.1	<i>Entrance to the University of Zagreb's student centre</i>	195
11.1	<i>Coffee</i>	248
11.2	<i>Lap top</i>	248
11.3	<i>Danijela's room</i>	250
11.4	<i>Selected examples of Petar's photographs</i>	254
11.5	<i>Mili's room</i>	255

**INTRODUCTION:**  
**'CROSSING THE LINE', 'TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE'**

### *About the study*

'Crossing the line' and 'taking up the challenge', the phrases in the introduction's title, have been taken from interviews with two first year undergraduate students from the University of Zagreb. These students were interviewed about their higher education choices and experiences on two occasions: in April 2007, when they were first year students, and in October 2007, when one of them had enrolled into the second year of study and the other had not. The choice of these two phrases for an introduction to this thesis rests upon my impression that they encapsulate the challenges many students experience both at entry to university and during their first year of study, the extent of the challenges varying according to the social profile of the student and the characteristics of his/her educational institution.

'Crossing the line' is both a physical and symbolic aspect of higher education entrance procedures in Croatia. On the one hand, it refers to an actual, physical line on a sheet of paper which separates the names of people who have met entrance requirements from those who have not. On the other hand, it refers to a line symbolizing personal experiences of success for some and failure for others. In other words, the line is not just abstract and neutral, but rather a tangible bearer of distinction between the successful and unsuccessful applicant. In addition, the line is both symbolic of a finish line in relation to entrance procedures, but also a starting line in relation to a student's university experience.

The phrase 'taking up the challenge' captures not only how students experience 'crossing the line', i.e. course enrolment, but also course progression. The phrase particularly illustrates the challenges of students identified as educationally disadvantaged in this study: first generation students, students who attended vocational schooling, those who do not receive adequate academic support during their studies, those who have financial difficulties and finally those who do not have adequate living and learning conditions. The responses of these students contradict assumptions about student pathways as primarily shaped by personal characteristics. Such assumptions are captured, for instance, by Bouillet and Gvozdanović (2008) who analysed the responses of 325 students from the University of Zagreb. These students were asked to explain why they thought more than half of the Croatian student body never complete their course, and the analysis showed that 50.2 per cent of students indicated personal characteristics (e.g. laziness, lack of motivation, lack of determination, health issues) as the main reason for low completion rates.

This study is positioned in the field of sociology of higher education and widening participation scholarship more specifically. The study's overarching focus has been the question of how higher education choices are shaped for students from different social backgrounds in a Croatian higher education setting and how these students experience their first year of study and progress through it. More specific questions have included how the (non)possession of particular resources influences students' choices and educational experiences; whether there is a gender aspect to student pathways, and if so how this is played out; and how educational institutions contribute to the HE experience.

Theoretically, the study has been inspired by Bourdieu's approach to structure and agency as interrelated, his critical conceptual 'toolbox' for understanding practice, his methodological pluralism and his interdisciplinary perspective. With regard to this conceptual 'toolbox', the study has engaged with synthesised elements of Bourdieu's different types of capital, habitus and field in order to propose a relatively holistic approach to understanding social and gender differences in higher education participation. Indeed, his conceptual focus on the interrelatedness between habitus and field has provided this study with a sociologically relational account of student pathways rather than a focus on either their social, personal or institutional aspects. On one level, working with his 'toolbox' in a Croatian HE context is a contribution to sociological theorising in the Croatian field of sociology of education; Tomić-Koludrović (2008) notes that 'up until recently, Croatian sociology was still characterized by a monolithic approach that characterized it in the socialist period, in which theoretical sociology was purposefully blocked or neglected because it could offer as its insights "heterogeneity, differences, plurality" (Rotar 1988, p.147). On another level, this study's exploration and extension of Bourdieu's concepts is a contribution to contemporary international debates on the usefulness and applicability of his framework for 'noticing' the ways in which social inequalities are educationally created and reinforced.

This study's data has resulted from a critical, multiple case study, mixed methods research design. Its 'critical' lens comes from the conviction that 'what creates inequality is the fact that others have differential access to resources, income, wealth and power which enable them to avail of the opportunities presented in education' (Lynch and O'Riordan 1998, p.470). The study draws on multiple data (secondary statistical data, questionnaire data and interview data) gathered in the academic year 2006/2007. The statistical data includes information for all Croatian undergraduate students (e.g. parental educational level), the questionnaire data includes responses from 642 first

year undergraduate students at six case study faculties which are part of the University of Zagreb, and the interview data was collected from 28 students at the same six faculties whose first year educational progress was more closely explored.

At the time when this study was conducted, there was very little Croatian research on higher education participation. Therefore, this study provides a theoretical and methodological framework with which future research in this area can interact. The methodological and empirical relevance of the research derives from it being the first mixed methods study in Croatian higher education participation research and in providing the first qualitative data on the social aspects of student pathways in the Croatian HE context. The study's qualitative aspect is particularly pertinent to the field of sociology of education in Croatia, since as Tomić-Koludrović (2008) has noted, there has been a 'serious lag' in the application and understanding of qualitative methodology in Croatian sociology. However, a methodological review of 31 articles examining different facets of HE participation, published in recognised British educational and sociological journals between 2000 and 2006<sup>1</sup>, also showed that mixed methods research was underrepresented in the broader context of HE research: 19 articles reported purely quantitative research, 8 purely qualitative and only 4 employed a mixed methods research design. In this respect, this study also contributes to overcoming the quantitative-qualitative divide in HE participation research more generally.

Finally, the study's findings have implications for the educational policy context. Higher education systems in Europe are generally being 'harmonised' through Bologna process reforms, and one of the reform's recommendations is for HE systems to implement measures which would ensure equal access, progress and completion for socio-economically disadvantaged students. This study's findings suggest that supporting socio-economically disadvantaged students to successfully access, progress and complete their studies requires a more sensitive understanding of their circumstances than the one displayed in the Bologna policy documents. For example, one of the few measures cited in the documents relates to 'appropriate studying and living conditions' (Berlin Communiqué 2003), whereas this study has identified measures such as: institutional provision of both 'cold' and 'hot' knowledge about educational careers, objective

---

<sup>1</sup> The choice of journals was made on the basis of rankings by Gorard, Rushforth and Taylor (2004), resulting from the frequency of the 50 most frequently submitted journals, their relative rank for submissions rated 5/5\* and 1-4, and their Social Science Citations Index impact score. The chosen journals were: the Oxford Review of Education, Journal of Education Policy, British Journal of Educational Studies, British Journal of Sociology of Education, Educational Studies, Educational Review, Educational Research, British Educational Research Journal, Research Papers in Education, Cambridge Journal of Education and Journal of Further and Higher Education.

assessment, institutional opportunities for meeting colleagues and working with them, virtual meeting spaces, teacher-student mentoring schemes, sufficient numbers of needs-based scholarships, student loans, well equipped libraries, and internet provision of resources, to name but a few.

### *Thesis overview*

Part 1 'Researching higher education pathways' addresses the contextual, theoretical and methodological aspects of this study which explores students' higher education choices and experiences. Chapter 1 presents and discusses the Croatian higher education setting and its social aspects, as well as the study's relevance in the Croatian higher education policy context. Chapter 2 contains a review of selected higher education participation research and considers how it has informed the research study theoretically and methodologically. Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical tools which underpin this study. Finally, Chapter 4 outlines the study's methodological framework and its research implications.

Part 2 of this thesis presents the analysis of student interviews and questionnaires, which illustrates how differing levels of resources, gender and institutional factors contribute to higher education choices and experiences. Chapter 5 'My dad studied here too' examines the contribution of the students' (non)possession of cultural resources to their educational pathways, Chapter 6 'Who you know counts' examines the contribution of their social resources, and Chapter 7 'The weight of costs' the contribution of their economic resources. Chapter 8 'Changing places' focuses on how the private and public spaces students occupy reflect on their educational experiences. Chapter 9 'The playing fields' and Chapter 10 'Inclusive and exclusive aspects of institutional habituses' examine the educational fields students interact with and how their characteristics reinforce educational advantage or disadvantage.

Finally, Part 3 draws on the interviews of two first generation and two second generation students in order to deepen the understanding of how student educational pathways are socially coloured (in this study these pathways include continuation to higher education, 'choice' of course, first year educational experience and enrolment or non-enrolment into the second year).

## **PART 1**

# **RESEARCHING HIGHER EDUCATION PATHWAYS**

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION - THE RESEARCH STUDY IN CONTEXT

The conducted research on student choices and experiences is set in an HE context whose political, economic and social surroundings are in transition. The formal beginning of this transition dates back to 1991 when the Republic of Croatia gained independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and embarked on a project to introduce democracy into its political, economic and social structures. The transition from socialism towards a vision of Western European democracy has been characterised by phrases such as 'democracy-in-the-making' and 'transitional country' (Spajić-Vrkaš 2003, p.33) and it has broadly entailed movement from a planned economy towards a market economy and from state ownership towards private ownership<sup>2</sup>.

These local societal changes, as well as the global transformations that affect them, have found their expressions in the Croatian HE system. For example, the 1996 Act on higher education institutions has enabled the emergence of a private HE sector. Furthermore, as indicated in an OECD (2006) report on tertiary education in Croatia, the preparations for Croatia's accession to the European Union has formed the context for various structural reforms in the Croatian HE system. Thus, as Babić, Matković and Šošić (2006) have observed, the Croatian HE system is itself in a process of transition; and this transition reflects changes in the wider social context.

This chapter locates the research study in its educational policy context. It addresses the implications of the European 'Bologna process' reform for the Croatian system of higher education and highlights the observed national educational policy indifference towards its 'social dimension'. In addition, the chapter sketches the social profile of the Croatian student body (by ethnicity, father's educational level and gender), illustrating a socially differentiated higher education field.

---

<sup>2</sup> It is important to recognise that although the general tone of Croatia's transition can be captured in the mentioned economic trends, this is a simplification of its complexities. As Sekulić and Šporer (2002) note, Yugoslavia had a self-management market economy, i.e. although private property was limited, the market was allowed to function as a prime economic regulatory mechanism (p.86). This meant that the market played 'a greater role in Yugoslavia than in any other socialist country' (ibid).

The key policy framework for the transition process in Croatian HE is provided by the Bologna process objectives as spelled out in ministerial documents beginning with the 1999 Bologna Declaration through to the Leuven Communiqué of 2009<sup>3</sup>. Implementation of these objectives can be observed in Croatia from the academic year 2005/2006 when the first 'Bologna generation' enrolled into HE. The structural reforms have included the adoption of a system of easily readable and recognizable degrees, supported with the introduction of a Diploma Supplement; the adoption of a three-cycle system of studying: undergraduate (3-4 years of study), graduate (1-2 years of study) and postgraduate (3 years of study); the establishment of a system of credits as proposed through the European Credit Transfer System; and, finally, the introduction of external quality assurance procedures, to be carried out by the Croatian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education established in 2004. Such reforms have been described in Bologna policy documents as of 'primary relevance' (Bologna declaration 1999, p.3) in order to establish the European area of higher education as a site of student and staff mobility.

However, a Bologna process objective entitled the 'social dimension' has remained neglected in the Croatian context. This objective draws attention to equal access, progress and completion opportunities in HE with particular focus on socio-economically disadvantaged students. The social dimension is captured in the Berlin Communiqué (2003) as follows:

Ministers stress the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background (p.5).

This ability to access and complete HE studies without obstacles pertaining to one's socio-economic status is reaffirmed in the Bergen and London Communiqués (2005, 2007). According to the London Communiqué (2007):

We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations (p.5).

---

<sup>3</sup> Croatia signed the Bologna declaration at the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague, 2001.

In the same tone, according to the Leuven Communiqué (2009): 'access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies' (p.2). In other words, the social dimension of the Bologna process introduces a social justice aspect to the prevailing economic and political justification for the Bologna HE reform. Indeed, according to Kladis (2003), a conclusion of the Bologna Follow-Up Seminar in Athens in 2003 was that the social dimension 'should aim at reducing the social gap and at strengthening social cohesion both at national and at European level' (p.354).

The only reference to the social dimension in the Croatian Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (2003) concerns access to HE: an article in the Act states that a university, polytechnic or school of professional higher education determines the procedure for selecting candidates in a manner that guarantees the equality of all candidates irrespective of their race, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, assets, birth, social status, disability, sexual orientation or age (para.77). While this article is more encompassing with regard to risk factors than those expressed in the social dimension of the Bologna process, which focuses on socio-economic characteristics, the emphasis on access overlooks the social determinants of progress and completion. In addition, the equal rights perspective taken in the Croatian act is not accompanied by any measures which would enable the exercise of these rights.

Indeed, in practice measures seem to be working against equal educational opportunities. To illustrate this, whereas in 1993/1994 the government paid for the tuition fees of 88.2 per cent of students, in 2004/2005 the government covered the tuition fees of 43.3 per cent of students; the increase in student numbers has not been accompanied by an increase in public spending on their education. Furthermore, determination of fee paying status is based primarily on academic criteria. In other words, there is no socially sensitive aspect to fee determination. Also, according to Farnell (2009), there are 10,000 state scholarships per 130,000 students and only 30 per cent of these scholarships are needs-based. In relation to the low number of scholarships for socially less privileged groups, the amount of funds (500-800 Croatian kunas [approx. 60-100 pounds] per month) is also deemed insufficient (Farnell 2009). The increase in the number of students paying tuition fees, where the tuition fees are primarily academically defined, as well as limited and low funding opportunities suggest that socially sensitive educational policies are not a priority in the Croatian HE context.

The lack of regard to ensuring equal opportunities in HE in Croatia reflects a lack of research on HE access and progress. An OECD (2006) report captures this in the following statement: 'There are few data on the characteristics of those who enter tertiary education...it is not known whether there is a significant differential access rate by social class, or income' (p. 45). Similarly, Croatia's report (2009) on the implementation of the Bologna process indicates that: 'Recently there have been some studies published which indicate that the level of representation of students originating from lower income families may be lower than had been assumed until now. There is a need to collect further information in order to plan targeted activities' (p.43). In other words, researching the social aspects of HE access is a relatively new phenomenon in Croatia which requires further development. A similar situation can be observed in the case of neighbouring Italy. According to Finocchietti (2004), 'until recently' there has been limited research on the social profile of Italian students and as a result university policies 'underestimated – or even ignored – the trend towards differentiation of demand and needs in the student population' (p.459).

The rare attempts to raise the issue of social inequalities in HE have included a few academic articles (e.g. Ilišin 2008, Puzić, Doolan and Dolenec 2006), activities on the project 'Right to Education: Increasing Equal Access to Higher Education in Croatia', led by the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE), and the student protests of April-May 2009. With regard to the IDE project, an outcome of the project has been a policy document entitled 'Policy recommendations for increasing equal access to higher education in Croatia' (2009), as well as several articles in a Croatian on-line newspaper *H-alter* which addressed social inequalities in HE (e.g. Doolan 2009a, Doolan 2009b, Doolan and Matković 2008). Also, the student protests across Croatian universities in the spring of 2009 brought up the issue of inequalities in the context of increasing tuition fees.

These isolated examples of academic, policy and activist contributions to the issue of educational equality in Croatia are far from the empirical and policy discussions on widening participation present in contexts such as the UK or USA. As Kettley (2007) remarks, the sociological lens to differential university participation is largely connected to research from these two contexts. However, the following section on the social profile of the Croatian student body suggests that such discussions are equally pertinent to the Croatian context.

### *Student profile*

The demographic composition of both Croatia and its HE system is significantly ethnically homogenous. According to the last national census of 2001 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics), 89.6 per cent of the population in Croatia declared themselves Croatian<sup>4</sup>. This ethnic profile is largely reflected in the ethnic composition of the Croatian student body. According to an OECD report (2006) on tertiary education in Croatia, out of a total of 120,822 students in Croatian HE in the academic year 2003/2004, 116,339 (96%) were of Croatian nationality, followed by those of Serbian (1,378, 1.2%), Bosniak (170, 0.1%), Czech (166, 0.1%), Slovenian (166, 0.1 %) and Hungarian (121, 0.1%) nationality<sup>5</sup>. As a result, unlike HE participation literature from countries such as the USA or UK which tends to address ethnic differences in educational pathways, ethnicity has not figured as a key concept in this research study<sup>6</sup>.

However, the composition of the student body by parental educational level does not mirror the wider social context, as can be seen from a comparison of the structure of students by father's educational level (Table 1.1) and the structure of the educational level of men aged 40-49 (according to the 2001 census), into which age cohort the fathers of the majority of observed students can be assumed to fall (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1 Total number of students in Croatian higher education (2001–2007) and students by father's educational level (Source: CBS, author's calculation).

	Total	Up to secondary schooling	Secondary schooling	Higher education	Missing
2001/2002	107911	7.7%	50.4%	39.4%	2.5%
2002/2003	116434	7.6%	51.6%	38.5%	2.3%
2003/2004	120822	7%	51.3%	37.6%	4.1%
2004/2005	128670	7.5%	53.4%	36.4%	2.7%
2005/2006	132952	7%	54.1%	36.4%	2.5%
2006/2007	136129	6.7%	55.3%	36%	2%

<sup>4</sup> 4.5 per cent of the population declared themselves as Serb, 0.5 per cent Bosniak, 0.4 per cent Hungarian, 0.3 per cent Slovenian, 0.2 per cent Czech, 0.2 per cent Roma, 0.1 per cent Albanian, 0.1 per cent Montenegrin and 4.1 per cent as members of other ethnic groups.

<sup>5</sup> Similar results with regard to the dominant majority were also found in the conducted research study where out of 642 surveyed students at the University of Zagreb in the academic year 2006/2007, 97.6 per cent indicated they were Croatian citizens, 2 per cent indicated they had dual citizenship and 0.3 per cent indicated they were citizens of another country.

<sup>6</sup> Although ethnicity has not figured prominently in the conducted research study, authors such as Novak (2008) have drawn attention to the under-representation of the Roma minority in Croatian higher education. Novak cites official data from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES) which shows that in 2008 there were 11 students from the Roma community in Croatian higher education, whereas 9,463 members of the Roma minority were declared in the 2001 census. According to Novak, a contributing factor to such under-representation is the low completion rate of Roma pupils at lower levels of schooling.

Table 1.2 Men in Croatia between the ages of 40-49 by educational level (Source: CBS 2001, author's calculation).

	Total	Up to secondary schooling	Secondary schooling	Higher education	Missing
2001	334789	22.7%	60.5%	16.3%	0.5%

The data show that second generation students (by father's educational level) constitute over a third of the total student population whereas only 16.3 per cent of men in the 40-49 age group have completed HE. In addition, around 7 per cent of students in the observed period had fathers who have completed up to secondary school education whereas 22.7 per cent of men in the 40-49 age group belong to this educational level. These results suggest that the odds of continuing to HE for students whose fathers have completed up to secondary schooling are significantly lower than for students whose fathers have an HE degree.

In addition, Table 1.1 shows that although the Croatian HE context has been following the trend of HE expansion<sup>7</sup>, this expansion has not benefited students whose fathers have completed up to secondary schooling: these students are consistently under-represented in the student population. Judging by the data, there has been some improvement in HE participation for students whose fathers have completed secondary schooling.

The composition of the student body by father's educational level across type of higher education studies (see Figure 1.1 and 1.2 below) shows further differentiation in the educational profile of students who enrol into academic as opposed to vocational study courses. The figures illustrate that second generation students are over-represented not only in the total student population but also in the more 'prestigious' HE track, that of academic higher education study<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Enrolment into the first year of higher education study in Croatia has increased from 23,165 in 1994/1995 to 39,762 students in 2007/2008, which indicates a 72 per cent increase (Matković 2009, p.243). As a proportion of a generation, in 1994/1995 29.4 per cent of students enrolled into higher education immediately following secondary schooling, whereas in 2007/2008 this increased to 50.8 per cent (ibid).

<sup>8</sup> The Croatian higher education system is described in Appendix 8.

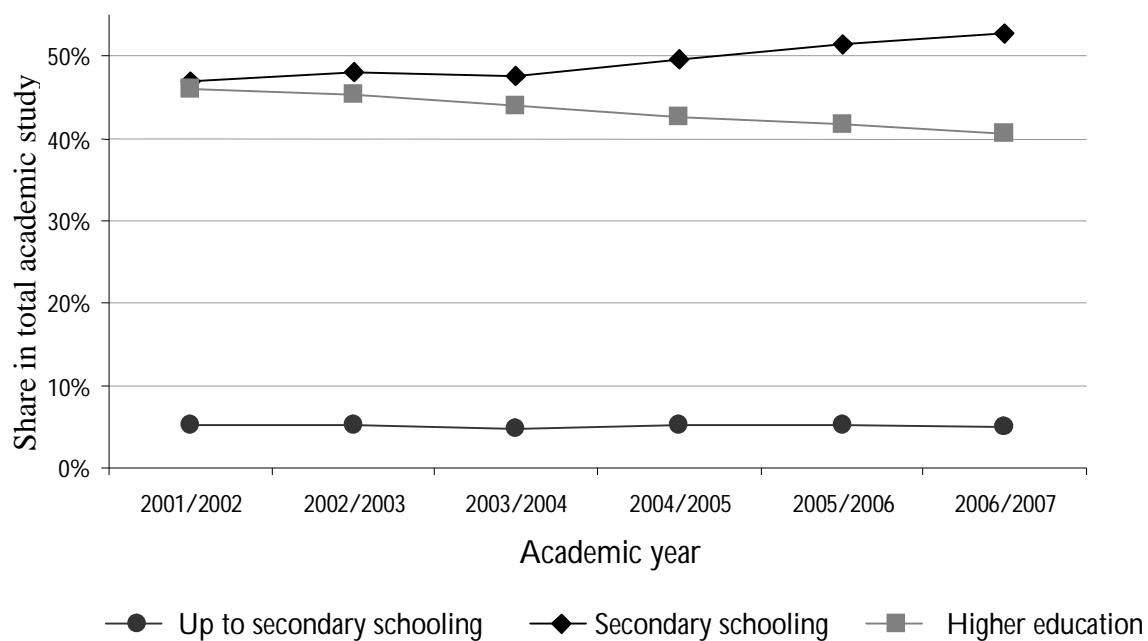


Figure 1.1 Father's educational level – academic study courses.

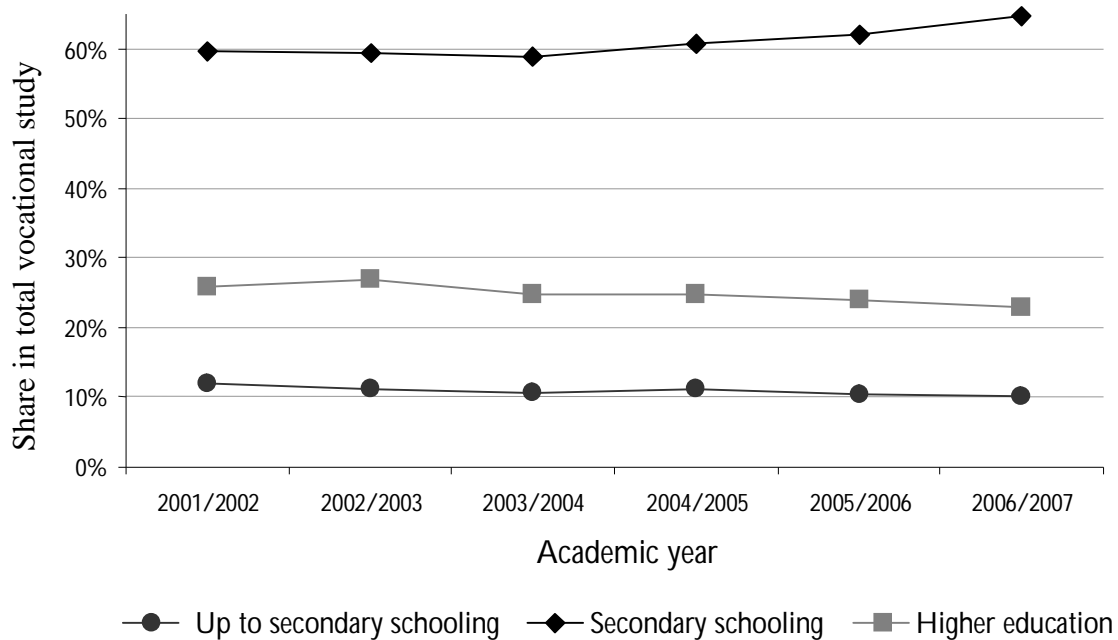


Figure 1.2 Father's educational level – vocational study courses.

A more detailed examination of the data shows that, for example, in the academic year 2006/2007, over a third of students on academic courses (40.5%) and slightly over a quarter of students (22.9%) on vocational study courses had fathers with completed HE (see Appendix 1.1 and 1.2 for data). On the other hand, in the same academic year, 5 per cent of students on academic courses and 10.1 per cent on vocational study courses had fathers with up to secondary schooling. Such data from the Croatian HE context is similar to Leathwood and Read's (2009) indication that in the UK 'there are some suggestions that students from working-class backgrounds are more likely to study vocationally-related courses and modules' (p.55).

According to Egerton and Halsey (1993), access to HE in the UK has been changing in three significant ways: the HE system has considerably expanded, there has been no reduction in relative social class inequality and there has been a significant reduction in gender inequality. The available data from the Croatian HE context has so far confirmed these observations. As the above data show, there has been an expansion of the HE sector in Croatia and inequalities persist with regard to the chances of continuing to HE and particularly enrolling into academic study courses for students from different educational family backgrounds. In relation to diminishing gender inequalities in HE, the 2001 census data show that 20.4 per cent of women and 13.6 per cent of men in the 25-29 age cohort indicated having completed HE (CBS 2001). According to Ilišin (2008), such data illustrates a feminisation trend in Croatian HE which began with the generation of women born in the 1960's (p.232).

Indeed, data on the gender composition of the Croatian student body in the period between the academic year 1992/1993 and 2003/2004 (OECD 2006) signal that the educational profile of the Croatian population has been changing in favour of women. Whereas women accounted for 48 per cent of the total student population in 1992/1993, they formed the majority (53.7%) in 2003/2004 (see Appendix 1.3 for data). Figure 1.3 illustrates this change.

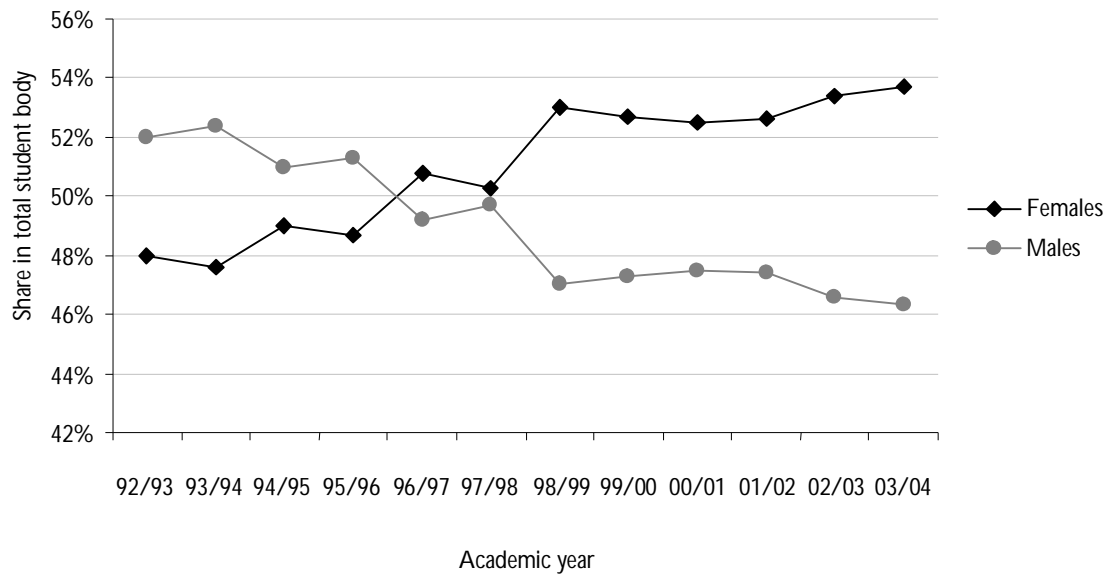


Figure 1.3 Gender composition of the Croatian student body (OECD 2006).

More recent data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2009) show that out of a total 134,188 students in the academic year 2008/2009, 73,827 (55%) were women. These figures contribute to Leathwood and Read's (2009) observation that in a number of countries worldwide 'women now constitute a higher proportion of the undergraduate student population than men' (p.3). However, the authors also point out that in most countries across the world gender subject stratification remains:

Women are very much a minority, however, in engineering and technology, computer science, architecture, building and planning, and also constitute less than 50 per cent of students in mathematical sciences, physical sciences and business and administrative studies (2009, p.55).

And indeed, although the Croatian data suggests an overall increase in the number of women attending HE, according to an OECD (2006) report there is a tendency for women in Croatian HE to concentrate on the 'traditionally female professions' such as education, humanities and art, social sciences, business and law, and health protection and social services (p.72). Similarly, Ilišin (2008) finds in her study that gender differences can be observed between selected faculties at the University of Zagreb with men constituting a significant majority in the technical sciences (88.2%) and women in biotechnology (90.5%) and biomedicine (82.1%). This data suggests that

HE choices are not only associated with family educational background, as suggested in earlier tables and figures, but also with gender.

A further important issue in Croatian HE is that many of the enrolled students do not complete their enrolled course, and those who do study beyond the prescribed time frame. According to Van den Berg and Hofman (2005), 'survival rates' are over 80 per cent in the UK, around 55 per cent or less in Austria, France, Portugal and Turkey and 35 per cent in Italy. In the Croatian HE context statistical findings show that over the 12 year period from 1991 to 2003, a total of 370,945 first-year students were enrolled in Croatian institutions of HE but as few as 117,527 students graduated in the same period, which makes a mere 31.7 per cent of the total number of enrolled first-year students (Babić 2005). In other words, Croatia's case is similar to Italy's with regard to low completion rates. In addition, Babić et al. (2006) report that the Croatian students who graduated in 2004 on average studied 6.9 years for a university course. This is significantly higher than the Irish average study time of 3.1 years, higher than the Dutch (5.5 years) and German (5.3) average study time, yet lower than the Italian (7.5 years) (Van den Berg and Hofman 2005). As with the lack of research on HE access in Croatia, there is also a lack of research on why students do not complete their enrolled course.

In summary, while the Croatian HE system has been undergoing reforms along Bologna process objectives, the focus of these reforms has been structural, i.e. changing cycles of studying, associating credits to courses, issuing diploma supplements and introducing formal channels of quality assurance. The social dimension of HE as defined in Bologna process documents has not attracted policy attention in Croatia, although it has been given progressively more attention in ministerial documents on a European level as the Bologna process has developed.

A contributing factor to such policy indifference in this respect is the lack of empirical research on social inequalities in Croatian HE which could inform policy solutions. Basic frequency data on the social profile of Croatian HE students indicates a socially and gender stratified student body whose composition deserves theoretical, empirical and policy attention. To this end, this study has explored how HE choice is shaped for students with differing levels of resources, as well as the gendered aspects of their choices. In addition, in the context of high non-completion rates in Croatian HE, a further question asked was how students experience their first year of study and what contributes to their progress. The following chapter examines studies which have addressed these questions across different cultural contexts.

## CHAPTER 2

### STUDIES ON HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Who accesses higher education? What influences their choices? Which factors help and which hinder higher education progress? How do these factors exert their influences? This chapter examines the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of research studies which have addressed such questions. The first part of the chapter addresses how HE access and choices have been examined in selected examples of recent international research (e.g. England, Ireland, France, the Czech Republic and Slovenia), as well as limited Croatian research. The second part of the review looks at research on HE progress and completion. These sections largely focus on research conducted in Western European countries which have a longer tradition of researching this area, and thus more research to draw upon, seasoned with examples from contexts more similar to Croatia in terms of geographical location, history and the country's economic and political situation. The chapter addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the (a)theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the reviewed participation research studies and ends with a consideration of how these insights have informed this research study.

#### *Accessing and choosing a higher education course*

The emphasis of the reviewed research on access is on the chances of enrolling into a course of study (e.g. Flere and Lavrič 2005, Simonova 2003, Duru-Bellat 2000), how choice is constructed before one applies (e.g. Reay et al., 2005, Brooks 2003, Ball et al. 2002, Gayle, Berridge and Davies 2002, Archer and Hutchings 2000), and how it is constructed once one is accepted (e.g. Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, Galland and Oberti 2000).

Regarding the chances of entering HE, the reviewed research examines this quantitatively and longitudinally. Simonova (2003), in reporting her quantitative research using data from six surveys conducted by the Czech Republic's Academy of Sciences, echoes Bourdieu by claiming that persistent social differentiation in HE participation in the Czech Republic has been linked to cultural, rather than economic capital. She states that:

It was not economic capital (financial resources) that played a dominant role in intergenerational educational reproduction, but cultural capital (the education of the parents, and the acquired linguistic and symbolic codes connected with them) (p.484).

Although Simonova (2003) finds a strong relationship between continuing to post-secondary education and parents' education in the Czech social environment, from a longitudinal perspective she concludes that the significance of this relationship has not increased since the 1989 revolution.

Findings from the Czech context with regard to the social profile of the student body echo Cooke et al.'s (2004) research on HE participation in the English context. According to these authors, the majority of undergraduate students come from educationally advantaged backgrounds and the profile of the student body has largely remained the same despite a doubling in the number of students attending university in the last 20 years. This identified association between parental educational level and continuation to HE is also indicated by Duru-Bellat (2000) in France and Flere and Lavrič (2003) in Slovenia. According to Duru-Bellat, choices within French HE are marked by social inequalities: the proportion of top executive and teachers' children is 32.5 per cent in the first level of academic university tracks (p.35). Flere and Lavrič used existing statistical data and a survey administered to first and fourth year students at the University of Maribor to look at the relationship between social inequalities (primarily class) and HE access. On the basis of the presented data, the authors concluded that 'the appearance of cultural and educational reproduction is acute' (2003, p.285), since they found that young people whose fathers have completed higher education or beyond were approximately 14 times more likely to enter HE than those whose fathers have not completed primary education. However, the authors also observed that 'the socially induced inequalities in the odds of entering university were about 15% lower in 2001 than in 1970' (2003, p.288).

Although these studies are informative in relation to observing social differences in HE participation across different social contexts, they are less theoretically engaging with regard to how such social differences are shaped. For example, Flere and Lavrič (2003) do not engage with theoretical explanations of observed differences, Cooke et al. (2004) offer a factor-based approach to exploring student decisions, i.e. they list factors without providing a social explanation of the underlying processes, and Simonova (2003) lists theoretical possibilities (e.g. modernisation theory and conflict theory) that largely remain unexplored in relation to her findings. As a result, this work provides what Lynch and O'Riordan (1998) have described as 'a

map of how educationally stratified our society is' and an 'empirical floor on which other analyses can be built' (p.450); however, it does not challenge how inequalities are reinforced nor does it give attention to the experiences of those who constitute the percentages they examine.

A more detailed consideration of what might influence such a social composition of the student body can be identified in studies focusing specifically on HE choice. However, as Reay, David and Ball (2005) note, the area of HE choice is both 'under-researched and under-theorised' (p.viii). In other words, the pool of research to draw upon is limited. One such study on student choice is Brooks' (2003) two-year case study research of the future plans of 15 young people aged 16-18 in England, which looked at the influence of family and friends on HE choice. The research took Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as an explanatory starting point; however, Brooks found that although the means by which the young people in her sample constructed their hierarchies of HE institutions and courses strongly supported Bourdieu's contention that each family transmits to its children a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos, there were also several social processes she observed which could not be subsumed under that explanation. These included the influence of friends and also choice differences between young people from similar social locations. She illustrates the differentiating role of social capital by quoting the case of a working class father who consulted better educated colleagues at work about his daughter's educational choices. Brooks' research is insightful in its recognition of social capital in the HE choice process, thus acknowledging the complexities that challenge deterministic accounts of social reproduction theories; the qualitative aspect of Brooks' research contributed to her finer analysis.

Another study which looked at HE choice is Reay et al.'s (2005) research which explored individual, familial and institutional factors shaping the HE choices of pupils at six diverse educational institutions in London. Relating this to the previously mentioned research, unlike Simonova's and Flere and Lavrič's quantitative research which focused on familial factors influencing HE access with a particular focus on parents' educational level, or Brooks' qualitative research combining the familial and individual, Reay et al.'s study broadens the research scope to identify the role of institutional factors (e.g. status of the HE institution). The authors draw on Bourdieu's conceptual framework to argue that the choice process 'is differentiated according to the distribution of relevant capitals' (p.160) and that both institutional and familial habituses are important in students' choices. In comparison to the mentioned studies, Reay et al.'s (2005) research gives a more holistic appreciation of student choices by acknowledging that decisions

are constructed within a complex interplay of social factors that are underpinned not only by social class, but also importantly gender and ethnic differences. According to Kettley (2007), the importance of such an emphasis on gender and ethnicity lies in its exploration of discourses inhibiting the participation of groups which have been neglected in participation research.

Reay et al.'s (2005) study also explores the educational choices of both middle class and working class pupils through a mixed-methods lens across different institutions. As such, the study overcomes the criticisms of HE participation research raised by Kettley (2007), i.e. that it tends to consist of a single type of data and that it tends not to have a comparative institutional perspective. The study is also theoretically reflective unlike factor based approaches (e.g. Cooke et al. 2003, Gayle et al. 2002, Yorke 1998, Johnes and Taylor 1989).

Research on HE choice in Croatia dates back to studies conducted by Magdalenić et al. (1991) and Martić (1970). On a descriptive level, Magdalenić et al. (1991) examined the social characteristics of the student body, their value systems, religious attitudes, as well as attitudes towards the Communist party and students' free time activities. The study employed a survey administered in 1987 to 5 percent of the total student population at the University of Zagreb, and in 1988 to 10 percent of all first year undergraduate students at the same university. The results of both questionnaires indicated that the majority of students studying at Zagreb University at that time came from Zagreb or its immediate surroundings (61%), and that most lived with their family (49.8%). In addition, 46.1 per cent of students estimated their financial circumstances as average whilst 33.4 per cent as good. The research also showed that 32.3 per cent of students' fathers had a higher education degree and more than 63 per cent of students reported that their families had over 100 books in their households. The overall impression these results give is of a fairly privileged student cohort.

Martić's (1970) study examined the social profile of students at the University of Zagreb between 1959 and 1969 and included students in all years of study. Unlike Brooks' and Reay et al.'s research, which explored students' choice processes before enrolment, this study examined choice in retrospect. The research findings showed that women were more intrinsically motivated than men and that students who had completed a secondary grammar school and/or had completed their secondary school education with high grades were more intrinsically motivated. Statistically significant differences were found between students whose parents were manual

workers and those whose parents were non-manual workers, the latter being more motivated by course interest.

With regard to the time when the decision to enrol in a particular course of study was made, Martić (1970) takes earlier decisions to indicate greater commitment to the course of study. The results showed that earlier decisions were made by those students whose fathers were from non-manual occupations, who went to a grammar school and were high achieving pupils. Such earlier decisions were also associated with the selected course: students studying architecture, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and medicine are reported to have made their decisions earlier than students at other departments. Although useful in drawing attention to aspects of HE choice in 1960's Croatia, Martić's work resembles factor-based approaches in that he does not give an account of how such differences are shaped. This lack of theoretical engagement also pertains to the study by Magdalenic et al. (1991).

Slightly earlier research (Supek 1969) from Croatia shows that social differentiation can be observed with regard to choice of study route. Supek finds that students from manual backgrounds are more likely to enrol in vocationally oriented courses, whilst students from non-manual backgrounds tend to enrol in academic courses. This finding echoes Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) research in the French HE system a decade later, but also more recent research which shows social differentiation according to study routes (e.g. Leathwood and O'Connell 2003, Gayle et al. 2002, Galland and Oberti 2000). This observation has also been illustrated with recent data from Croatia as presented in Chapter 1 which showed that second generation students are over-represented in the more 'prestigious' HE track of academic study. Unlike Martić's atheoretical stance, Supek explains his observation by linking it to a family's verbal culture, i.e. cultural capital, whereby those students who come from well educated backgrounds feel more comfortable in the social sciences and humanities, which require verbal skills, whereas those coming from manual backgrounds might feel more comfortable with technical tasks and mathematics ability.

### *Progress and non-completion*

As Archer and Hutchings (2000) note: 'widening access does not, in itself, ensure equality of experience within higher education' (p.570). Following enrolment, Longden (2002) lists three possible outcomes of the association between a student and an HE institution. Firstly, a student

successfully completes the course; secondly, the student fails to satisfy the course requirements and is required to leave (involuntary departure); and finally, the student leaves early without achieving the intended qualification aim of the course (voluntary departure). In an effort to understand non-completion, it seems important to distinguish processes that lead to both voluntary and involuntary departure.

Archer (2003b) observes that: 'Few studies have examined students' reasons for non-completion, but the evidence that does exist points to numerous factors' (p.131). Indeed, scarce sociological research on student progress and non-completion in HE differs according to whether it acknowledges a distinction in the progress of students with different social characteristics, and how it addresses progress and non-completion, i.e. whether it gives primacy to factors internal to the institution (e.g. organizational factors such as institutional provision and demands of the programme), external to the institution (e.g. financial difficulties), or a combination of the two (e.g. academic and social integration). The dichotomous division between internal and external factors was also identified by Johnes and Taylor (1989). According to the authors, there are two broad categories of non-completion factors: student related (e.g. previous scholastic record, type of school attended, parental occupation) and institution related (e.g. student-staff ratio, length of course, accommodation provision).

Duru-Bellat (2000) emphasises the importance of institutional factors (e.g. pedagogical practices and assessment) on progress in the French HE system, claiming that social differences relating to academic achievement are no longer observed once the student enrolls. In other words, social barriers to HE participation are located prior to enrolment, whereas the quality of the institution shapes progress once the student enrolls. This point is reiterated by Galland and Oberti's (2000) research from France, who found in their quantitative research study that social origin and father's highest degree do not have a significant influence on progress since young people of modest social origin who get as far as HE have already overcome the significant obstacles. A similar argument is made by Simonova (2003) when she states that the higher an individual has worked his/her way up through the educational system, the less his/her social origin influences the likelihood of success once in the system. However, the reported research overlooks whether there is a difference between students belonging to different social backgrounds with regard to how they experience their time at university. Although quantitatively there may not be a social difference in progress, that does not mean there is no qualitative difference which requires recognition.

The reviewed research from England differs from the findings above by anticipating differences in progress and completion between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students (e.g. mature students, students with a disability, part-time students, ethnic minorities, working class students). This assumption is reflected in the choice of participants, since studies tend to focus on non-traditional students as the group at risk. An example of such research is Leathwood and O'Connell's (2003) longitudinal mixed-methods study exploring non-traditional students' experiences throughout their degree courses at an HE institution in England. In their findings section, the authors particularly emphasized financial difficulties, confidence in ability and institutional factors (e.g. lack of support from teaching staff) as contributing to students' struggle. Unlike the research quoted above from France and the Czech Republic, a particular strength of this study was the gathering of qualitative data, which, as the authors argued, provided a rich body of students' accounts of university experiences. However, by focusing on non-traditional students, the researchers risk criticism from authors such as Kettley (2007) or Lynch and O'Riordan (1998); these three authors share the conviction that 'to fully understand social-class-related disadvantage, it is necessary to [also] explore how privilege operates' (Lynch and O'Riordan 1998, p. 452).

The same sampling issue can be found in Hodgkinson and Bloomer's (2001) qualitative research study carried out in England on student experiences in further education: all the interviewees apart from one were from working class backgrounds. Hodgkinson and Bloomer illustrate the complex nature of non-completion which can be influenced by individual circumstances, such as relationships, that cannot be subsumed under either institutional or background factors. Here they bring into sociological research the personal characteristics of those who do not complete their course. Having said this, it is important to note that it would be rather simplistic to assume that high non-completion rates in certain departments significantly depend on the personal characteristics of the student body. This is why the authors also draw on Bourdieu in acknowledging the role of cultural capital for second generation students when personal problems do arise - a resource which students with a working class background tend not to have.

Cooke et al. (2004) conducted a quantitative longitudinal study of student perceptions of university life, covering a wide range of issues, such as financial concerns, paid work, recreation, social support and academic quality. Their sample included both traditional and non-traditional students, and differences between the two groups were measured. The results indicate that students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds potentially experience a more difficult time at

university, especially since they are more likely to be in part-time employment resulting from financial difficulties. However, for an understanding of how this problem influences them more specifically, the authors argue for a qualitative aspect which their study does not include.

A quantitative approach is also taken in Rhodes and Nevill's (2004) research study which examines deeply satisfying and deeply dissatisfying facets of university experience for a first year cohort of undergraduate students. The questionnaire was drawn from a focus group of 10 students and included 25 facets likely to lead to student satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their university experience and thus affect progress. Unfortunately, the study does not elicit social class, gender or ethnic differences in responses but rather focuses on the first year cohort as a homogenous group, giving more emphasis on factors relating to institutional action which could potentially reduce the number of voluntary and involuntary premature exits on a more general level. However, the strength of this research compared with the qualitative research mentioned earlier is that its survey methodology enables basing institutional recommendations on the responses of a larger number of students.

Another factor-based study that does not explicate social class or gender differences in non-completion is Yorke's (1998) research which identified the following factors as influencing non-completion: wrong choice of field of study, inability to cope with programme demand, unsatisfactory experience of the programme, dissatisfaction with institutional provision of facilities, problems associated with finance, unhappiness with the locality of the institution and health or relationship issues. Institutional recommendations identified by Yorke include financial support to students, provision of information with regard to field of study and institutional quality.

Factors influencing progress, such as academic preparedness, academic experience, institutional expectations, academic and social match, finance and employment, family support and commitments and university support services were examined in Thomas's (2002) mixed methods research study. Thomas draws on the term 'institutional habitus' as a lens for explaining why some non-traditional students persist in HE despite the difficulties encountered, claiming in a critical theory tone that educational institutions favour the knowledge and experiences of dominant social groups to the detriment of others. Therefore, if an institutional habitus is inclusive, students from diverse backgrounds will find greater acceptance. Thomas's findings suggest that the inclusiveness of an HE institution is reflected in the relationships between

students and staff (e.g. staff know student names, show interest in their work, students call staff by their first name), as well as in teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. language of instruction, assumed knowledge). A further important point identified by Thomas's research is the role of friendships and social networks in overcoming progress difficulties, i.e. social capital.

Finally, the above research studies relating to non-completion did not focus in depth on access factors and how these might influence progress and completion. This is addressed in a quantitative research study conducted in an Irish HE department by Byrne and Flood (2005), which examined student motivation for entering HE study, their preparedness for HE study and their expectations, as predictors of academic success. However, because the study is not longitudinal, it is impossible to assess the extent to which the students' expected performance was also their actual performance. In addition, the study did not distinguish between traditional and non-traditional students; rather the student body was treated as a homogenous group. What the study does contribute to the previously reviewed research is the importance of looking at access factors as predictors of progress and completion.

Croatian research on student progress and non-completion is scarce. The most recent study to address this issue (Bouillet and Gvozdanović 2008) analysed the responses of 325 students from the University of Zagreb who were asked to explain why they thought more than half of the Croatian student body never complete their course. The analysis resulted in four main categories of responses: personal characteristics (e.g. laziness, lack of motivation, lack of determination, health issues), institutional characteristics (e.g. institutional inflexibility, poor teaching, demanding programme), contextual factors (e.g. financial difficulties, employment) and the wider social context (e.g. corruption, nepotism, difficulties with employment following HE completion). According to the authors, 50.2 per cent of students indicated personal characteristics as the main reason for low completion rates, 25.2 per cent indicated institutional characteristics, 6.8 per cent contextual factors and 6.5 per cent the wider social context. Although such isolated categories overlook the relational aspects of these factors (e.g. financial difficulties exacerbated by high tuition fees or lack of motivation resulting from employment uncertainties), it is interesting to note that the responses reflect factors identified in the reviewed literature. A further interesting point is that the students' dominant assumption is that they study in a meritocratic system where success is up to the individual.

Earlier research on this topic in Croatia dates to when Croatia was still part of the former Yugoslavia. In 1969, Supek finds that once in HE there are no differences in progress between students from working class backgrounds and others, which goes against the reviewed research from England but resembles the mentioned research from France and the Czech Republic. Under the assumption that there were no quantitatively observable social differences in progress between students occupying different social positions in the 1960's, what Supek does not address is a more detailed explication of why students do not complete their course, i.e. he does not examine the possibility that there might be a difference between students from different backgrounds with regard to reasons for their voluntary or involuntary departure.

### *Influences of reviewed research on the study*

The reviewed research built on, as well as clarified an array of methodological and theoretical questions which informed the development of this research study: what knowledge claims can be made? What would be an appropriate theoretical starting point and methodological approach for this research study? How do these relate to epistemological positioning? What ethical aspects need to be considered? This section and the following chapters on the study's theoretical and methodological framework address and develop these questions. In particular, this section addresses the influence of reviewed research with regard to: the strengths of conducting both quantitative and qualitative research for understanding HE participation in Croatia; sampling decisions; the observed lack of social explanation with factor-based approaches and the use of Bourdieu as a theoretical option; as well as identified factors shaping access and progress as a reference for questionnaire development.

In relation to the strengths of conducting both quantitative and qualitative research, the reviewed research on HE participation has been conducted from both a purely quantitative and purely qualitative approach as well as a mixed methods approach. Researchers arguing for a qualitative approach have criticised quantitative research, claiming that by ignoring personal meaning and focusing on fixed variables used for prediction, there has been too much emphasis on the descriptive properties of HE participation and not enough on its explanatory properties (e.g. Laing and Robinson 2003)<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, their interest has been to look at specific reasons and circumstances that surround an individual's choice of HE institution and his/her progress in it. On the other hand, authors using quantitative research have tried to establish patterns of HE

---

<sup>9</sup> A purely quantitative approach, such as Tinto's (1993), is criticised for not giving enough attention to the perceptions of the students themselves (Yorke 1999).

participation according to specific variables, often claiming their influence on policy-making as a strength over qualitative researchers. Indeed, the reviewed research which has listed policy recommendations (e.g. Yorke 1998) usually had a quantitative aspect to it. The reviewed examples of mixed methods research allowed for not only the qualitative aspect of uniqueness in individual definitions and expectations but also the quantitative aspect of shared patterns or commonalities. From an empirical standpoint, the choice of a mixed methods approach seemed adequate in a context such as Croatia, which does not have a tradition in either quantitative or qualitative HE participation research. In other words, both an exploratory and confirmatory perspective was required for the research study. However, it was also recognised that the theoretical underpinnings of the conducted study, as explicated in the following chapter, were more compatible with a mixed methods approach rather than just a quantitative or qualitative lens. As Warde (2002) observes, Bourdieu was an advocate of 'methodological polytheism' (p.1008).

Regarding the issue of sampling, non-completion has been reported as highest among first year undergraduate students in several of the research examples discussed above, both from an international and Croatian context (e.g. Laing et al. 2005, Rhodes and Nevill 2004, Staničić and Marušić 1996, Supek 1969). As a result, first year students have usually been sampled for monitoring progress. Informed by this, this study has also focused on first year undergraduate students and their transition into the second year of studies.

Furthermore, in an effort to understand the complex nature of non-completion, some research studies have included students who have withdrawn, current or recently graduated students, or both groups. The decision to include either one or the other group is criticized by Yorke (1999), who suggests that concentrating exclusively on those who have withdrawn places the focus on a particular group of students rather than a representative sample of the student body. According to Yorke, explanations of decisions to leave, or indeed 'non-decisions' to drift away, need to be grounded in a more encompassing understanding of the institutional context that is also provided by those who stay in the system. On the other hand, he deems it important to include those who have withdrawn into the research on non-completion since their perspectives are unique<sup>10</sup>. To illustrate this, he cites the appearance of 'health problems' as having an influence on non-completion, an issue which could not be anticipated without actually consulting those who withdrew (Yorke 1999). An additional reason for including people who have withdrawn can be

---

<sup>10</sup> A practical reason which makes research with people who have withdrawn somewhat difficult is the problem of gaining access to respondents (Quinn et al. 2005).

observed in Aldridge and Rowley's (2001) study which showed that a considerable proportion of their sample of 'withdrawals' were either considering returning to their studies or had moved on to another institution. By following a group of students through their first year of study into the second year, the conducted research study has included both those who successfully progressed to their second year and those who did not. However, a weakness of such a limited time frame is that even those who successfully enrol into the second year may not be successful in completing their studies.

A final point with regard to sampling decisions relates to research which showed that gender was a determining factor in the choice of higher learning institution and disciplinary orientation. For example, Galland and Oberti (2000) found that 71 per cent of female students in France specialize in the humanities. Care was taken in the conducted research to represent the voices of both female and male students.

Turning to research findings on HE participation, Gayle, Berridge and Davies (2002) claim that HE participation literature sends the message that there is social inequality in access to HE, i.e. that factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity shape the chances of entering higher education and the choice of disciplinary orientation. However, while there is general agreement in the field of sociology of education that social differences in educational outcomes do not result solely from individual abilities, especially when these are supposed to have a genetic origin (e.g. Nash 2005), the sociological theorising of how such social differences are shaped is less consensual. In the reviewed studies, factor-based approaches lacking explicit theoretical underpinnings dominate. These studies, particularly with quantitatively oriented authors, are located within the policy context and list factors which inform policy without theoretical reflection. Where sociological theory had been clearly pronounced in the reviewed studies it tended to be Bourdieuan and explored qualitatively or through a mixed-methods lens. The empirical usefulness of Bourdieu's conceptual tools for exploring social inequalities in education as indicated in the reviewed studies contributed to their use in the conducted study.

Finally, the reviewed literature identified the following factors as relevant for understanding access and choice: student background variables such as gender (e.g. Leathwood and Read 2009, Reay et al. 2005, Gilchrist et al. 2003), parental educational level (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, Simonova 2003, Flere and Lavrič 2003, Supek 1969), occupational status (e.g. Duru-Bellat 2000), previous educational experiences (e.g. Martić 1970), perception of HE and the course (e.g. Reay et al.

2005, 2001; Archer and Hutchings 2000), influence of friends (e.g. Brooks 2003) and motivation (e.g. Martić 1970). Common factors regarding student experiences and progress include access variables (e.g. Byrne and Flood 2005), level of satisfaction with the course in general (e.g. Yorke 1998), interpersonal relationships with staff and other students (e.g. Thomas 2002), financial circumstances (e.g. Cooke et al. 2004, Leathwood and O'Connell 2003) and accommodation (e.g. Holdsworth 2006). These factors informed the construction of the questionnaire which was administered to students as part of this study.

In conclusion, the review identified certain gaps in selected research examples, such as a focus on class issues without acknowledging its interrelationship with gender and ethnicity, a single type of data, cross sectional approach and atheoretical stance. It also identified the strengths of research which attempted a holistic approach to student characteristics, a mixed methods approach, a longitudinal perspective, as well as a pronounced theoretical stance. These strengths informed the design of this study and the following chapter develops the final point mentioned: theorisation.

## CHAPTER 3

### THROUGH A THEORETICAL LENS – BOURDIEU'S CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

This chapter makes a case for why Bourdieu's theoretical framework has significantly shaped the reported study. It takes account of Bourdieu's interest in epistemological issues, his understanding of the structure-agency debate and recognizes his contribution to overcoming the reductive dualisms of social theory inherent in approaches such as functionalism, Marxism or Rational Action Theory. The chapter also engages with his tools of analysis: capitals, habitus and field and suggests that their relational properties offer a relatively holistic approach to exploring social inequalities in higher education. In addition, critiques of his theoretical lens in terms of determinism and lack of attention to gender are also considered.

Bourdieu's approach to structure and agency as interrelated, his critical conceptual toolbox for understanding practice and his methodological pluralism are some of the more obvious reasons why Bourdieu's work has been identified as useful for this study. However, my interest in Bourdieu's work has also been more implicitly inspired by the ways in which he brings together different fields of study, such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, photography, literary theory, art and cultural studies, as well as his understanding of sociology as having a political purpose. For Bourdieu (1992), the role of the sociologist is to 'destroy the myths that cloak the exercise of power and the perpetuation of domination' (p. 49-50).

#### *Considering knowledge claims*

Authors vary with regard to how important they think it is to locate social research philosophically. According to Archer (1988), one's ontological and epistemological 'convictions' are central 'for the simple reason that it is impossible to do sociology at all without dealing with them and coming to some personal decisions about them' (p.xii). On the other hand, on a more pragmatist note, Silverman (2006) claims:

I have lost count of the run of the mill qualitative research papers I have come across which find it necessary to define their work in terms of obscure philosophical positions such as phenomenology or hermeneutics. You will not find either of these terms in the glossary of this

book for one simple reason. In my view, you do not need to understand these terms in order to carry out good qualitative research. Indeed, if you try to understand them, my guess is that you will not emerge from the library for many years! (p.7)

Although an in-depth consideration of philosophical positions is beyond the scope of this study, this section briefly addresses the nature of knowledge claims and their underlying ontological assumptions in order to establish this research study's theoretical underpinning. Many of the points made can be read as well trodden ground in the social sciences and critiqued as unnecessary 'agonizing' over the epistemological dilemma; however, as a researcher working with Bourdieu's conceptual framework which is explicitly philosophical, I argue that some attention needs to be given to an understanding of the relationship between knowledge, social theory and methodology.

Questions which arise from this relationship include: is social reality external to individuals, imposing itself on their consciousness, or is it the product of individual consciousnesses? Do human beings respond mechanically to an existing social reality, or do they create it through their own actions? If there is an external social reality, is knowledge that which captures this reality and, following on from that, is this knowledge accessible to the social scientist? If, on the other hand, there is no such reality, is knowledge that which is personally experienced, and again to what extent does the social scientist have access to these personalized 'knowledges'?

This dichotomous set of questions pertaining to assumptions relating to one's ontological and epistemological stance lies at the centre of the macro-micro dichotomy informing much social research. Indeed, this divide is often perpetuated in social science literature through the author's positioning in one of the ontological-epistemological-human nature opposites, namely: realism versus nominalism, positivism versus anti-positivism, determinism versus voluntarism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, cited in: Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.6), which in turn is said to influence practical research decisions concerning theory and methodology. This linear presentation of 'the building blocks of research' can be found in literature on social research. For example, Crotty (1998, p.4) uses diagrams to illustrate the apparent linearity of how epistemology influences theoretical perspectives, which in turn influences methodology and then methods; Grix (2004) details how ontology influences epistemology, which influences methodology and then methods, which influences the data collected. This has in many cases led to an 'either/or' portrayal of social reality, knowledge about this reality and the role of human actors in relation to

it, thus overlooking the creative ways in which practice and research can overcome such dualisms.

The 'epistemological dilemma', reflecting the either/or portrayal of social reality, refers to the disagreement in social research about what and how we can know. Purist proponents of the macro-level approach to reality argue that reality is singular and objective. As a result, knowledge is that which is absolute, just as the knowledge that water boils at approximately 100 degrees Celsius stands true both in Zagreb, Croatia, and in Cambridge, England, as anywhere else in the world. In this scenario, the role of the social scientist is to explain the 'outer', observable patterns of human behaviour in terms of cause and effect (May 1996), just as the natural scientist will explain how under the right conditions, i.e. sufficient heat, water will boil. The methodological implications of such a theoretical perspective have been to treat social phenomena objectively, with researchers remaining emotionally detached, making context and time free generalizations, and reporting their findings formally using the impersonal passive voice (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.14).

Such an approach to social research has been criticised by researchers positioned on the other side of the research spectrum, namely qualitative purists, who reject the notion of an objective reality and argue their case for multiple, constructed realities. In this approach, knowledge is subjective; the methodological implications are to see social phenomena as time and context bound, to report findings informally and to acknowledge the value bound nature of research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.24). Therefore, in opposition to an objectivist epistemological stance, subjectivist perspectives assert that knowledge is affected by its relation to the knower, i.e. it is necessarily relative.

This dichotomous and somewhat simplistic discussion of the epistemological assumptions underlying two very different traditions in social research (which are also connected with the 'incompatibility thesis' on a methodological level, and the 'agency-structure' debate with regard to the role of human actors) risks overlooking the complexities surrounding the absolutist-relativist distinction, for neither the objectivist nor the subjectivist scenario provides an explanation for the two faces of social reality that can be observed. On the one hand, one could argue that society is fluid, each piece of interaction unique and the diversity of human experience limitless; on the other hand, one could claim that, despite the surface confusion of events, society is also ordered, patterned regularities of social behaviour exist and human beings are likely to behave in similar

ways in certain situations (Bradley 1996). According to Bradley (1996), one can consider the two apparently contradictory views of society to be correct. The central question then is how to account for the parallel existence of these two views and their subsequent structure/agency implications?

One way to overcome this dualism is to assume the existence of a social reality which is a result of individual agency but with similarities between individuals that cause patterns, i.e. there exist macro patterns of 'we-identities' that are seen as formed by the collective decisions of individuals (Hodkinson 1999). This would be most similar to an interpretivist approach. Alternatively, there is the possibility that individual identities do exist but they are locked into career trajectories and are largely determined by macro patterns of social reality (Hodkinson 1999). This would be most similar to a post-positivist approach. In both these schemes, the micro level both produces and is reproduced, as is the macro level. Indeed, both the macro and the micro level are both the medium and the outcome.

Assuming that certain social science research has been correct in connecting ontological claims with epistemological ones, how does one link these social reality scenarios to epistemological considerations? In an objectivist scenario, knowledge is that which is certain beyond doubt – the emphasis being on the 'macro' level. In the subjectivist scenario, scientific knowledge is not possible since it pertains to a multitude of realities – here the emphasis is on the 'micro' level and the culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty 1998). In the interpretivist and post-positivist scenarios, knowledge is produced at both the 'macro' and 'micro' levels; this relational framework is epistemologically neither absolutist nor relativist but is akin to a critical realist perspective whereby there is no way in which we can produce knowledge that is certain beyond doubt since the macro and micro levels are both medium and outcome.

The philosophical doctrine underlying a critical realist approach is fallibilism (Moore 2004), whereby absolute knowledge is impossible, or at least all claims to knowledge could be mistaken. However, fallibilism, unlike scepticism, does not mean abandoning our knowledge - we need not have absolute justifications for what we know, but that does not mean we cannot know at all. A critical realist perspective captures this claim in the assertion that 'of all the different ways in which we (i.e. humanity) go about producing knowledge, some have been proved more reliable than others, and that it is to these that we should look for truths that are *not* certain beyond question but *less fallible* than others produced in less reliable ways' (Moore 2004, p.149 – original

italics). This offers an alternative to the epistemological dilemma discussed above by asserting the possibility of gaining knowledge, albeit not absolute, but neither relative. In this case, knowledge is not an 'either/or' question but rather a matter of degree. Such a stance, which moves between particularity and generality, is compatible with Bourdieu's interest in universal and particular explanations. Indeed, Bourdieu (1997) himself argued for 'a critical and reflexive realism which breaks at once with epistemic absolutism and with irrationalist relativism' (p.133). In addition, Potter (2000) recognizes the similarity between Bourdieu's theoretical perspective and critical realism by claiming the following: 'It is my belief that the relation between Bhaskar's ontological descriptions and Bourdieu's substantive analyses is such that they are mutually supportive' (p.245)

<sup>11</sup>.

The above discussion has aimed to clarify the epistemological underpinning of this research study. The approach taken is that knowledge claims are produced on both the macro and micro levels of reality since these stand in a dialectical relationship with each other. Indeed, locating knowledge on either of these levels has lead to theoretical approaches focusing either on structures to explain different practices, or on agents. The following section examines such theoretical approaches in more detail and locates this study in a Bourdieuean dialectical framework which recognizes the interrelationship between structures and agents.

### *Theoretical approaches*

The nature of the relationship between the individual and society – the structure-agency debate, has been a central concern of social theory (May 1996) and this concern is reflected in sociological theorising on social inequalities in education (structural, agential and the interrelationship of the two). The philosophical framework that has animated this research has been Bourdieu's philosophical position; Bourdieu's response to structural and agential approaches is that they give a partial view of reality: structural approaches set aside the experience of agents, whereas agential approaches make it impossible to account for the resilience of social

---

<sup>11</sup> It is also similar to Geertz's (1979) dialectical stance combining 'experience near' (particular, context specific) and 'experience distant' (general, universal) concepts (cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). However, the presented study dismisses the dialectical assertion that each paradigm offers a meaningful and legitimate way of knowing and understanding, as suggested by Greene and Caracelli (2003). In fact, one could argue that the dialectical thesis that all paradigms have something to offer is quite 'pragmatic' since it rests on the what-works-best premise. The difference between the pragmatic and dialectical stance lies primarily in the latter being reflexive about ontological and epistemological assumptions by inviting the juxtaposition of opposed or contradictory ideas in an effort to observe the tensions these invoke, as a way of understanding a social phenomenon better. On the other hand, pragmatism as a theoretical perspective rests on the choice of paradigm and method according to what works best to meet the practical demands of an inquiry, but renders any potential ontological and epistemological assumptions as less important (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003).

structures (Bourdieu 1992). In order to establish the theoretical preference of this research study, this section briefly reviews dominant sociological explanations of social inequality in and through education<sup>12</sup>.

Structural sociological interpretations, such as functionalism and Marxism, take the society as the basic unit of analysis, emphasising structure over agency. However, although both interpretations look at the ways in which society as a whole fits together, according to Lynch and O’Riordan (1998): ‘What functionalists deem to be inevitable, and even necessary, for the maintenance of social order in society, Marxists interpret as an injustice which has to be overcome’ (p.446). In an educational context, functionalism suggests that the role of education is to ensure societal order by preparing people for the particular milieu for which they are ‘destined’ (Blackledge and Hunt 1974), claiming in effect that the classed nature of society and the impact class has on education are legitimate tools for ensuring social order. As Lynch and O’Riordan (1998) note, functionalism does not challenge institutionally and structurally grounded hierarchies and inequalities.

Functionalism’s vocabulary of educational selection and allocation for the labour market, underpinned by a tone of meritocratic determinism, is replaced in Marxist approaches by domination and exploitation. According to Marxist perspectives, social arrangements tend to benefit some groups at the expense of others, i.e. education is not seen as beneficial to society but rather as maintaining social inequalities and social conflict (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 1976). The strength of Marxist approaches on a general level, as opposed to functionalist perspectives, lies in their acknowledgment of social tensions and conflict. However, an important criticism of a traditional Marxist account of social life is its underplaying of human freedom and self-determination in the education system. This criticism of traditional Marxist accounts comes from resistance theorists such as Willis (1977) and Giroux (1983), who take a neo-Marxist perspective and claim that oppositional cultures exist within the school system, rather than students from working-class families being ‘passively shuffled’ through the educational system (Stuart Wells 1996). For example, Willis’s research on working-class pupils in schools illustrated how a counter-school culture could be observed among a group of working-class boys, who appeared to be active agents in resisting institutional determinations. As Lynch and O’Riordan (1998) observe, resistance theorists offer hope for change that traditional Marxist approaches with their tone of structural inevitability do not. However, resistance theorists also optimistically assume a level of

---

<sup>12</sup> There are multiple sociological explanations of the association between social class, gender and education. Therefore, a quote from Karabel and Halsey (1977) is used as a disclaimer for the following broad sweep of theoretical approaches: ‘To classify schools and traditions of thought is inevitably to oversimplify a complex social reality, but it is also indispensable to coherent exposition (p.1).

political interest and engagement among the dominated (ibid.), as well as express optimism with regard to the outcome of resistance. For Bourdieu (1987), resistance is not always positive:

Resistance can be alienating and submission can be liberating. Such is the paradox of the dominated and there is no way out of it (p.184).

Resistance theorists are joined by rational action theorists in challenging the determinism of structural approaches. However, whereas resistance theorists acknowledge structural influences, rational action theorists emphasize the active role of the individual. That is, according to rational action theory, people behave according to their interests and attempt to maximise the utility of their decisions (e.g. Goldthorpe 1996, Boudon 1974). Hatcher (1998) explains the RAT perspective as follows:

Decisions about education progression are made on the basis of calculations of the costs, benefits and probabilities of success of various options. Success is defined in terms of the subsequent economic returns (as measured by income and occupational class location) (p.10).

In a similar tone, Goldthorpe (1996) states that actors have goals and usually alternative means of pursuing these goals and 'in choosing their courses of action, tend in some degree to assess probable costs and benefits rather than, say, unthinkingly following social norms or giving unreflecting expression to cultural values' (p.485). However, Lynch and O'Riordan's (1998) criticisms of RAT include that it lacks a convincing conceptual framework for interpreting the generative causes of differences in rational choices, that it has a weak notion of rationality and that it seems to take preference as a constant in the framing of educational choices. According to the authors, preferences are not fixed; 'they can be changed by the experience of schooling itself' (1998, p.447).

This study takes Bourdieu's theoretical position as its philosophical framework. Bourdieu claimed that sociologists had been too exclusively concerned with grasping the objective regular patterns or rules governing behaviour, thus overlooking the details and nuances of behaviour which make the manner of acting irreducible to simple objectivist description (1974). As Grenfell and James (1998) note: 'His intent is to find a theory which is robust enough to be objective and generalizable, and yet accounts for individual subjective thought and action' (p.10). Bourdieu characterizes his approach as constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism (e.g. Bourdieu 1989). He positions himself between authors such as Durkheim and Marx on the one

hand, and Schutz and the ethnomethodologists on the other and argues that the objectivist and subjectivist moment stand in a dialectical relationship (Bourdieu 1989, p.15). According to Bourdieu (1992), identifying the distribution of socially efficient resources that define external constraints bearing on interactions and representations, as well as the immediate, lived experience of agents, are two moments of analysis that are equally necessary:

On the one hand, the objective structures that the sociologist constructs, in the objectivist moment, by setting aside the subjective representations of the agents, form the basis for the representations and constitute the structural constraints that bear upon interactions; but on the other hand, these representations must also be taken into consideration particularly if one wants to account for the struggles, individual and collective, which purport to transform, or preserve these structures (1989, p.15).

Bourdieu's (1992) response to rational action theory is that he does not dispute that agents face options and make decisions, but he does dispute that they do this in a systematic and intentional manner (p.24). Bourdieu positions his theoretical approach both as a critique of structural perspectives, which understate the experience of agents, and agential perspectives which understate the impact of social structures. He goes beyond such traditional dichotomies (e.g. structure-agency, theory-practice and objectivity-subjectivity) and explains social and cultural reproduction by means of a constant dialectic between agency and structure (Robbins 1998). The following section examines Bourdieu's theoretical tools which capture his dialectic perspective.

#### *Tools of analysis – habitus, capitals and field*

The following section looks at the conceptual tools which have guided this research study and which constitute Bourdieu's (1984) understanding of practice as resulting from an interrelationship between habitus, capitals and field expressed in his 'formula': {[habitus] x [capital]} + field = practice (p.101). Initially, these concepts will be described separately; however, as the argument develops they will progressively become interrelated. Questions which will be addressed whilst sketching these concepts implicitly address critiques of Bourdieu's 'formula' as restrictive and formulaic. The questions include: (1) 'Capital' can refer to different types of capital. What capitals does Bourdieu refer to?; (2) In the formula, capital is separated from habitus. What is the relationship between these concepts?; (3) Does practice have a gender and ethnic dimension? Does this formula account for these?; (4) What is the nature of field?; (5)

How predictable is practice? Can Bourdieu's theory of practice explain social change and if so, how?

Bourdieu's main interest within the sociology of education has been to understand how education contributes to the reproduction of social class differences, which echoes a Marxist perspective. However, unlike traditional Marxist theorists, Bourdieu moves beyond the Marxist objectivist approach which understates agency, as well as its recognition of capital in terms of material goods (i.e. economic capital). In relation to the latter, Bourdieu (1985) identifies the social field as a multi-dimensional space and recognises the workings of two other types of capital in it: cultural and social. His concept of cultural capital has been widely used in educational research in order to examine the differences in educational outcomes between young people occupying different social positions (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, Simonova 2003, Hodgkinson and Bloomer 2001). According to Bourdieu's concretization of the concept, cultural capital is primarily inherited from the family and exists in its three states: embodied (long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body reflected in, for example, manners and linguistic competences), objectified (in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, books, dictionaries) and institutionalized (educational qualifications) (1986, 1973).

Bourdieu characterizes social capital, on the other hand, as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital' (Bourdieu, 1985, p.248). In other words, social capital refers to beneficial personal contacts. According to Bourdieu (1986), although cultural capital is given primacy in his research, the different forms of capital exist relationally, and it is their distribution (in volume and composition) at a given time that represents how the social world is structured. For Bourdieu (1989):

Agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess, and in the second dimension, according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital (p.17).

Bourdieu (1989) refers to economic, cultural and social capital as 'fundamental powers' (p.17). To answer the first question in this section's introduction, 'capital' in Bourdieu's formula is an umbrella term for economic, cultural and social resources which 'are or may become active,

effective, like aces in a game of cards' (p.17). According to Bourdieu (1986), capital is the principle which underlies the immanent regularities of the social world.

This consideration of capitals brings us to the second question raised in the section's introduction on the nature of the relationship between capitals and habitus. Bourdieu (1989) defines habitus as 'the mental structures through which they [agents] apprehend the social world' (p.18). More specifically, according to Bourdieu (cited in: Desmarchelier 1999), the habitus is a series of durable, transportable dispositions (1977, p.72), an unconscious and internalised 'roadmap' for action with encoded beliefs, social class and strategies for action (1984, p.170), which becomes a *modus operandi* for action, but which the individual defines and regulates continually (1990, p.75). In these terms, habitus is primarily classed and acquired through 'the lasting experience of a social position' (Bourdieu 1989, p.19). In other words, it is shaped by different types and quantities of capitals. However, although individual actions seem to be largely determined on a subconscious level by such a classed habitus, Bourdieu allows for individual agency in its development and modifications. As a result, as Reay (1995) has observed, 'habitus provides a method for simultaneously analysing the 'experience of social agents and...the objective structures which make this experience possible' (p.121); also: 'Habitus, then, is a means of viewing structure as occurring within small scale interactions and activity within large-scale settings' (Reay 2004a, p.439).

The capitals that shape habitus are activated in fields. This brings us to a further question identified in the introduction: what is the nature of fields? For Bourdieu (1992), fields are socially structured spaces consisting of 'a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)' (p.16) and institutions and agents struggle within this space according to the position they occupy in it. To illustrate this more graphically, Bourdieu (1992) compares the field to a card game where players compete for stakes with different cards and where the relative value of these cards as 'trump cards' is determined by the rules of the game. Importantly, Bourdieu sees social fields as fields of struggle where things always move and are never fully predetermined ('a structure that is different each time'), but which also act as constraining fields of force to the extent that he is 'often stunned by the degree to which things are determined' (1992, p. 200).

Translating these concepts into an educational context, Grenfell and James (1998) state that individuals in the educational system do not have equal amounts or identical configurations of

capital with which to obtain educational profits, i.e. some have inherited wealth (economic capital), cultural distinctions from upbringing (cultural capital) and family connections (social capital). According to the authors, as a result of this unequal distribution of resources, 'some individuals, therefore, already possess quantities of relevant capital bestowed on them in the process of habitus formation, which makes them better players than others in certain field games' (1998, p.21). For Bourdieu, it is the misrecognition of the influence social determinants can have on the educational career which makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984; Poupeau, 2000).

Although Bourdieu presents his concepts as relational and dynamic (e.g. 1992), which suggests unpredictability in how they shape practice, for Bourdieu their interrelated workings tend to result in predictable practices, which answers the question raised in the introduction with regard to the predictability of practice. A possible explanation for this is that although Bourdieu's theory of practice is a relational theoretical framework, he assumes fields and capitals which reinforce rather than transform habitus; this gives unchanging aspects of habitus centrality in the overall framework. For example, in *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu provides a diagram illustrating how practice is shaped. According to this diagram (p.171), objectively classifiable conditions of existence and position in the structure of conditions of existence shape a habitus (as a structured and structuring structure) which leads to certain classifiable practices signalling particular lifestyles. In this diagram, habitus is prominent, whereas both capital and field are implicit and seemingly static. As Potter (2000) observes, 'the initial class position of the agents engenders a habitus' (p.238). This point can be clarified with the following quote:

A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action (Bourdieu 1992, p.16).

This quote suggests that habitus reflects relations in the fields, as well as reinforces these relations with such reflection. In other words, it primarily reproduces rather than changes field relations.

Authors such as Mouzelis (2007), Reed-Donahay (2005), Skeggs (2004), King (2000) and Giroux (1983, quoted in Bourdieu 1992) have critiqued Bourdieu's concept of habitus as mechanistic and deterministic. For example, Reed-Donahay (2005) states that 'I have been critical in my work of his overreliance on a view of habitus that struggles to deal with resistance or change, and I

continue to feel that he did not lend enough attention to lived practice and social agency in his work' (p.9); for Skeggs (2004b) 'Bourdieu's model of resigned, adaptive working class habitus...closes down the working class possibility of playing the game' (p.87); whereas for Giroux (1983) habitus is: 'a conceptual strait-jacket that provides no room for modification or escape' (p.117). Similarly to King (2000), the argument presented in this thesis is that habitus risks such objectivism if: a. it is taken out of its broader relational context, i.e. the past, present and future fields it interacts with and which contribute to its workings, b. the fields are constructed as static rather than dynamic forces. As King noted:

In fact, when Bourdieu connects the habitus to the "field", by which he means the objective structure of unequal positions which accumulate around any form of practice, the flexibility which Bourdieu intends to be present in the concept of habitus – but which is in fact ruled out by the concept – appears. The notion of habitus begins to lose its rigidity (p.425).

...when connected to the field the habitus suggests a richer account of social life...(p.426)

In other words, by allowing for the dynamic nature of fields, Bourdieu's theory of practice could also account for social change. This 'dynamic' aspect is captured in Bourdieu's analogy of the battlefield to describe fields (e.g. 1992), which suggests that social reproduction does not occur without competition which could lead to social change.

Finally, Bourdieu's understanding of practice, as presented above, is a result of class dynamics. Indeed, as already mentioned, according to Bourdieu (1986), capital underlies the regularities of the social world. However, a question that arises with such explanatory exclusivity is whether other social factors such as gender or ethnicity contribute to how practice is shaped. In relation to this, authors differ with regard to how they evaluate Bourdieu's attention to gender. On the one hand, according to Adkins (2004a):

It is very well recognised that Bourdieu's social theory had relatively little to say about women or gender (although see Bourdieu, 2001) with most of his writings framed predominantly in terms of issues of class (p.3).

On the other hand, according to Kraus (2000):

He [Bourdieu] is one member of the discipline who cannot be reproached for being blind to gender in his analyses and empirical studies. Already in his earliest works he dealt with the relationships of the sexes, or with specific differences in the living conditions and social practices of men and women (p.53).

The main debate with regard to how gender relates to Bourdieu's theoretical framework is captured in a question raised by Moi (1991): is Bourdieu's theory capable of theorising social change or does he imply that social power structures always win? In this sense, feminist critiques of Bourdieu's theoretical lens (e.g. McRobbie 2004, Lovell 2000) resonate with non-feminist critiques (e.g. Mouzelis 2007, King 2000) which question his implicit determinism as discussed earlier.

More specifically, McLeod (2005) identifies two types of feminist engagement with Bourdieu's theoretical framework. On the one hand, there are authors such as Butler (1999), who reject his theory 'because of its perceived rigid determinism' (p.16). According to McLeod (2005), this reading of Bourdieu understands the field as a 'pre-condition for habitus', where there is no reciprocal effect upon the field. On the other hand, McLeod mentions feminist engagements with Bourdieu (e.g. McNay 1999) which conceptualize the relationship between the habitus and field 'as less tightly deterministic and rigidly presumed, emphasizing more the scope for improvisation and degrees of inventiveness alongside the structural and shaping qualities of habitus' (p.17). For example, Lawler (2004) interprets Bourdieu's practical sense as 'bounded rather than determined' (p.112); she also contends with Bourdieu that 'change is very difficult to effect, no matter how much they resist' (p.125). In a similar tone, although McNay (1999) critiques Bourdieu for overemphasizing the alignment of the habitus between subjective dispositions and objective positions with regard to gender, she also challenges notions of reflexive identity as developed by reflexive modernization theorists, claiming that they overemphasize 'the expressive possibilities of detraditionalization' (p.109).

Moi (1991) makes an interesting observation with regard to Bourdieu's theorizing of gender. Similarly to Butler, Moi's interpretation of Bourdieu's work on gender and agency is pessimistic; she concludes that for Bourdieu the embodied social is 'exceptionally hard to de-naturalize' (p.1030). However, she also contextualizes Bourdieu's perspective and concludes that his approach may have been useful to capture the Kabyle society he studied: 'it would appear that at that time, Kabylia was indeed a near-doxic society insofar as gender relations are concerned' (p.1033). Moi goes on to claim though that such a deterministic lens is less appropriate for

understanding the position of women and men in contemporary society which is 'far more complex and contradictory than Bourdieu acknowledges' (p.1033). This is a point also made by Witz (2004) who argues that:

A Kabyle tunnel vision truncated Bourdieu's grasp of the complexities of the modern gender order in differentiated, as distinct from relatively undifferentiated societies such as the Kabyle (p.217).

Observations and concerns raised by feminist critiques of Bourdieu have been considered in this study and they are further developed in the data analysis sections. In addition, Bourdieu's theoretical resources: cultural capital, social capital, economic capital, habitus and field have been critically extended in the study in order to capture how the choices and experiences of students occupying different social positions are shaped in a Croatian higher education context. Bourdieu's approach to class analysis, which is discussed in the following section, has also informed the conducted research.

### *Conceptualising class*

Labelling the differences which can be observed between people in relation to their (non)possession of different types of capital has been a central sociological issue which has raised definitional problems. For example, what constitutes 'class'? Is 'class' an appropriate label for capturing capital distinctions? Would it be more appropriate to talk about different 'social groups', 'status groups', 'social positions' or 'social layers'? Are such terms sufficiently self-contained to cover distinctions adequately? Are they cross-cultural? How useful is it to impose such labels from above, on the basis of measurable markers such as occupation, educational level or number of visits to the theatre? Do these labels have meaning unless they are experienced as meaningful by those labelled? Since this study focuses on the social determinants of educational practice, a discussion on conceptualising social differences is appropriate and necessary.

As mentioned earlier, Croatia is a country in transition. It has moved from the socialist self-management system peculiar to the former Yugoslavia towards a socio-economic system in accord with EU general practice. The socialist self-management system was expressly opposed to the concept of 'class' as being a capitalist concept. It was based on the concept of 'social ownership' of the means of production (ownership by neither the individual nor the government nor the state but by the society); this entailed limited scope for private enterprise, restricted to

agricultural small-holders and sole traders within certain occupations. Theoretically, everyone was working for the benefit of society as a whole, since there were no individual 'owners' of the means of production. As Outhwaite (2007) notes:

These societies [communist or state socialist] portrayed themselves as essentially classless or on the way to classlessness, and characterised by harmonious and cooperative, rather than conflictual, relations between their component strata (2.1).

It is important to recognise that this does not mean that distinctions did not exist in practice. Indeed, authors such as Sekulić and Šporer (2002) have identified political and economic elites in 1980s Croatia. However, transition implies a state of flux, and the stratification of Croatian society is still not stabilised, as noted by Croatian authors such as Malenica (2006). This makes it difficult for researchers to name divisions and objectify classes as communities. As Lazić (1987) contends, for class analysis one requires a structured social system. Applying this to the research study, collapsing students into 'Western' models of classes or status groups could be erroneous. In addition, class analysis is an under-researched field in Croatia which means that there are no developed Croatian models of social stratification which could tentatively claim empirical significance in this research<sup>13</sup>.

A further concern with imposing class distinctions relates to its value when there is no subjective awareness of its existence by the people to whom the division pertains. To illustrate this, in the research the interviewed students were asked what the term 'social class' meant to them<sup>14</sup>. Overall, regardless of the students' family background (parental educational level and estimation of financial status) there were four types of responses to this question. The first type includes responses from students who answered they did not know what social class meant and they did not want to speculate. The second type refers to responses by students who were not sure what social class meant, but they speculated in their answers. Examples include: 'you mean earning money and stuff like that?' (Tanja, SG) or 'you mean economically, who has how much money?' (Nino, SG). The third type consists of more confident answers which identify the economic dimension of class. Most answers could be subsumed under this category. An example of this type is a response such as: 'I think there are classes and people are allocated in a pyramid

---

<sup>13</sup> In other words, on a practical level, the transitional aspect of Croatian society and lack of sociological theorising on class in Croatia makes it difficult to take a 'grand theory' approach. However, further problems with conceptualising class in terms of 'objective' occupational terms include: whether to assign students to their own or parents' occupation and how to overcome the differently classed employment of mothers and fathers (Archer 2003a).

<sup>14</sup> 28 students were interviewed in total.

according to how much money they have' (Fabijan, FG). This economic conceptualisation of class resembles a Marxist focus on the material conditions of existence as socially differentiating.

Finally, the fourth type of answers includes two quotes which conceptualised class beyond its economic dimension. According to Marko (FG):

You have the rich class and the middle class and the poor class, but they all take out loans so they are the middle class too. People who have a lot of money also have connections and automatically better positions in society and privileges.

Although this student's conceptualisation of class is significantly economic, he acknowledges the interrelationship between economic and social capital in a class fraction of the dominant class and gives an example of how his conception of class works in practice. The economic dimension also prevails in the other student's quote; however, this student recognizes educational aspects of class: 'there are different social classes, one is who has more money, the other is according to education, depends who's looking. But I think the money one is more important here' (Fran, FG). Both these students give more complex understandings of class when compared to their peers. Indeed, their responses resonate with Bourdieu's recognition of multiple capitals as indicators of social differences.

What most of the student responses suggest is that class is not a politicised category in the Croatian setting, i.e. it is not a part of their taken-for-granted worldview. This is different to the UK context where the concept of class seems to be a named aspect of people's social identities. On the one hand, a strength of this un-naming in the Croatian context could be, as Harraway (1990, cited in Bradley, 1996) argues, that the very act of naming brings exclusions; categories construct one set of people as the 'other', whose experience is defined against that of the dominant group. Class labels can therefore be seen as fixed and possibly antagonistic. On the other hand, not explicitly naming observed differences as 'classed' does not mean that these differences are dormant. In addition, by not giving a label to social differences that can be observed in Croatian society, there is always the risk of overlooking an analytical tool which has the potential of being sufficiently politicised to change the circumstances of those who are negatively affected by its implicit properties.

Labelling and observing differences between people in relation to their possession of various types of capital has been a central sociological concern addressed by different traditions of

analysis. According to Wright (2005), what these traditions have in common is their contribution to a general ambiguity surrounding the term 'class'. For instance, Wright observes that: 'among writers who identify with Marxism there is no consensus on any of the core concepts of class analysis' (2005, p.5). Similarly, Sorensen (2005) claims that discussions of class concepts 'are often confusing because of the varieties of the meaning of the term class' (p.121), and Archer (2003a) states that 'there remains little consensus as to how to theorize the concept of social class and its relationship to education' (p.6). However, although ambiguities exist within and between approaches (e.g. Marxist, Weberian, Durheimian, Bourdieuan, post-modern), certain distinctive aspects and consistencies can be observed.

Classical perspectives on class deriving from Marx, Weber and the functionalist legacy are still argued for and against. According to Wright, what is distinct about Marxist class analysis is the centrality it assigns to the concept of 'exploitation' and its assertion of the potency of such an exploitation-centred approach for studying a range of problems in contemporary society (p.5). An important normative aspect associated with this is the Marxist commitment to a form of radical egalitarianism, i.e. a classless society in which the material conditions of existence are distributed in an egalitarian manner. In this sense, Marxist approaches are explicitly political and see capitalism as 'the enemy of equality' (Wright 2005, p.7). Criticisms of traditional Marxist approaches as raised by Bradley (1996) include that their emphasis on the economic dimension of social difference is too narrow and overlooks the importance of social distinctions based on lifestyle, educational experiences or patterns of residence and that they underestimate the social and economic significance of the middle classes.

Unlike Marxist class analysis, which constructs class as conflict groups where conflict originates in exploitation (Sorensen 2005), a Weberian class approach sees class as 'a determinant of individual actions and mentalities where these consequences originate in the *life conditions* associated with different classes' (Sorensen 2005, p.121). Weberian approaches do not assume that class will be the major source of conflict within capitalist society (Breen 2005), nor do they construct social status as economically embedded. Indeed, for theorists in the Weberian tradition, the Marxist rhetoric of conflict is replaced by the notion of competition between and within classes, and vocabulary, styles of dress, aesthetic tastes, values and manners are seen as shaping class gradations (Bradley 1996). Questions that Breen (2005) raises with regard to Weberian class analyses relate to how they can capture the diversity of positions in labour markets and economic

organizations in order to frame social differences, as well as how this framework accounts for occupational prestige as a contributing factor to life chances.

Both Marxist and Weberian approaches can be read as theoretical searches for 'big classes'; an approach which has been criticized by authors such as Grusky (2005):

Scholars have over-invested in the search for aggregate classes and under-invested in the study of more deeply institutionalised groupings at the disaggregate level' (p.67).

For Grusky, who advocates a modern Durkheimian analysis, contemporary class analysis should no longer try to conceptualize aggregate classes but should shift analysis to a local level of 'a grouping of technically similar jobs that is institutionalised in the labour market through means such as an association or union' (p.65). Similarly to a Marxist approach, this perspective is framed only in one-dimensional economic terms.

According to Wright (2005), class analysis is concerned both with macro and micro levels of analysis. What the previously outlined approaches have in common is their interest in the macro level of class analysis where the basic concept is class structure as 'the sum total of class relations in a given unit of analysis' (p.19). However, such a perspective is challenged by micro approaches in class analysis which attempt to understand the ways in which class is constructed and reconstructed by individuals. As Archer (2003a) notes, such micro approaches ('class as process') treat class 'not as a fixed, categorical concept, but as produced through interactions between individuals, groups, institutions and policies' (p.12). An example of a micro approach to class is investigating the extent to which 'class' is part of someone's social identity, i.e. whether it is passive (individuals are not particularly conscious of their 'class' belonging), active (there is an awareness of 'class' belonging) or politicised (an individual constantly thinks of him/herself in terms of a 'class' identity) (Bradley 1996).

Unlike the mentioned approaches which share an assumption that class differences can be observed, authors such as Pakulski (2005) question the explanatory power of the concept of class in contemporary society. Drawing on Tocqueville, Pakulski claims that societies are becoming progressively equal through expanding industry and commerce, increasing strength of civil society and the progressive democratization of culture which has led to the fragmentation of class in post-modern times. According to Pakulski (2005), contemporary society is a post-class society in which ethnicity remains the main line of division. However, judging by patterns of class

differences that are still observed in the social world, it seems legitimate to reclaim the use of class from such extreme relativism (e.g. Skeggs 2004).

Social class has been a key analytic category in Bourdieu's work. However, Weininger (2005) argues that despite its centrality 'the particular understanding of this concept that animates his [Bourdieu's] work remains murky in the secondary literature' (p.82). Weininger explains this lack of clarity by claiming that Bourdieu's conceptualisation of class cannot be identified with a single 'father figure' (e.g. Marx, Weber or Durkheim) since he 'borrowed as needed from the sociological canon' (p.82). In other words, it is difficult to situate his perspective within dominant class approaches. Furthermore, since Bourdieu developed his concepts in the context of concrete empirical analyses, Weininger argues that his propositions are linked to particular contexts (2005, p.83) which challenges the broader applicability of Bourdieuean class analysis. Finally, Weininger claims that Bourdieu's amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data makes his argumentation of class practices 'difficult to follow' (2005, p.83).

Bourdieu's class analysis consists of two 'moments': construction of objective structures by identifying the distribution of socially efficient resources that define the external constraints bearing on practices and exploring how agents (re)create them (1992, p.11). This understanding seems close to Archer's (2003a) interest in 'a theoretical position which can engage with, and account for, broad patterns of inequality combined with an analysis of people's lived experiences and identifications' (p.20).

For Bourdieu, social divisions and mental schemata are structurally homologous because the latter is the embodiment of the former (1992, p.13). In a Bourdieuean (1984) framework, class locations are determined by overall volume of capital and the composition of capital. Overall volume of capital distinguishes between the dominant class (e.g. industrialists, private sector executives, college professors), working class (e.g. manual workers and farm labourers) and the petit bourgeoisie (small business owners, technicians, primary school teachers); the composition of capital distinguishes between those who have high cultural but low economic capital (e.g. university professors) and those with high economic but low cultural capital (e.g. industrialists). Furthermore, as Weininger (2005) notes, class boundaries for Bourdieu 'must be understood in terms of social practices rather than theoretical conjecture' (p.85).

Following Bourdieu, the starting point for identifying social boundaries in this research has included observing practices rather than imposing a theoretical concept. In other words, social boundaries have been identified in a grounded way through an observation of how the possession of different types and volumes of capital shapes educational pathways. In this process, the ways in which the educational field positions students according to their capitals were observed, i.e. what are the resources that the educational field recognizes and who owns these resources. Put differently, how do the fields students interact with position them hierarchically. This approach resonates with Grenfell and James's (1998) suggestion that:

One should avoid reifying capital, the product and process of the fields, as a quantifiable object. Although, conceptually it is quantifiable, there is an extent to which we all possess capital to a greater or lesser extent. Ultimately the form it takes is arbitrary and only receives its value from that ascribed to it by field operations....We do not know we have capital until we enter a field where it is valued, where it buys something (p.25).

Such an approach also meets the criticism of composite measures of socio-economic status, which tend to consist of education, occupation and income/wealth indicators. According to McMillan and Western (2000), such measures might provide misleading results because individual components may have differential effects.

The problems of conceptualising class locations are manifold. According to Wright (2005), classes are not polarized, one-dimensional property rights, but rather a complex amalgam of powers and rights; there are contradictory locations within class relations; individuals who hold two jobs can belong to two different class locations at the same time; locations are temporal and they vary across different cultural contexts. This last point has been particularly emphasized earlier as an argument against the use of 'class' in a transitional social context such as Croatia. However, as Wright (2005) observes:

The reason we care about a person's class 'location' is because we believe that through a variety of mechanisms their experiences, interests, and choices will be shaped by how their lives intersect class relations (p.17).

In this study, although class has not been used as a term to indicate social distinctions between students, on a quantitative level the educational status of students' parents (as an indicator of cultural capital) and their estimation of family income (as an indicator of economic capital) have

been used to suggest students' social positions. On a qualitative level, distinctions of privilege have been understood in relation to the type and quantity of resources (economic, cultural, social and spatial) that require activating if educational choice is to be informed and educational progress successful. Apart from noticing how (un)availability of resources shapes educational pathways, the study has also been sensitised by feminist theory interacting with Bourdieu's framework (e.g. Reay 2005, Skeggs 2004, Lovell 2000) which has pointed to gendered aspects of practice.

To conclude, Bourdieu's conceptual tools, particularly cultural capital, social capital, field and habitus, have been used in HE participation literature to explain how particular academic and social circumstances render students educationally (dis)advantaged; the setting for this research tending to be the 'Global North' (e.g. Reay, David and Ball 2005, Brooks 2003, Thomas 2002). This research has critically drawn on Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus in a Croatian HE setting in order to explore its usefulness for understanding the educational choices and experiences of Croatian first year undergraduate students occupying different social positions. In this process, Bourdieu's theoretical framework has been associated with a critical realist perspective which shares Bourdieu's commitment to overcoming dualisms in social theory. This dialectical approach was identified as a strength over social theories which emphasize either structure or agency. In addition, a process-centred, bottom-up approach to social differences has been endorsed within the study drawing on the ways in which educational fields (mis)recognize different capitals. The following chapter outlines the critical, multiple case study, mixed methods methodological approach taken in this research and where relevant relates it to this chapter's theoretical discussion.

## CHAPTER 4

### STUDY DESIGN

This study has taken a critical case study approach to researching the HE pathways of Croatian students from different social backgrounds. Chapter 4 opens with a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach and presents the selected case study faculties. The section that follows tries to empirically and theoretically justify the use of mixed methods in the study, which brings the chapter to a consideration of the data collection and analysis procedures. Initially, a general outline of these procedures is presented, followed by a more detailed focus on the questionnaire and interview data and how they relate to each other in this study. The chapter also discusses data quality and ethical considerations and ends with a section on reflexivity. In this final section I analyse my own voice in the study and reflect on some of the potential sources of bias I have tried to address during the study.

#### *Case study research*

According to Yin, case study research is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (1984, p.23). In this study, an interest in 'real-life' contexts and the use of 'multiple sources of evidence' contributed to the choice of case study research as the study's methodological framework. The advantages of using a case-study approach in this research are best illustrated through comparison with two other research methodologies which have been used in HE participation research: surveys (e.g. Cooke et al. 2004, Rhodes and Nevill 2004) and ethnography (e.g. Laing and Robinson 2003, Bennett 2003, Mackie 2001).

Firstly, both of these approaches tend to focus on one type of data. That is, survey research is primarily concerned with providing quantitative or numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes or opinions (Creswell 2003), whereas ethnographic research focuses on the details of everyday lives captured by methods such as observations or conversation (e.g. Haimes 2002) which render qualitative data. According to authors such as Denscombe (2003) and Yin (2003), case study research is conducive to the use of a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods, i.e. it fosters the importance and combination of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Such data flexibility was identified as important in this study which, on the

one hand, wanted to open up spaces for young people to tell their accounts, rather than having their life histories objectified by the researcher (Smyth and Hattam 2001) and, on the other, wanted to examine the extent to which the themes raised by students could be reinforced in a larger sample.

Secondly, 'real life' contexts tend to be approached with a broad sweep in survey research and in-depth in ethnographic research. In the case of this study, a broad sweep was deemed insufficient to capture the details of students' higher education choices and experiences. Indeed, an ethnographic approach with its detailed empirical observation would have been more suitable for such an aim. However, the ethnographic detailed lens would have limited the research scope to one particular HE institution. For example, Laing and Robinson (2003) used an ethnographic approach to capture the underlying characteristics of the teaching and learning environment at Southampton's Technology Faculty. Since HE participation is an under-researched issue in Croatia and one of the aims of the research was to examine institutional effects on HE choices and experiences, a multiple-case study approach was deemed as more appropriate for this research study. Future research in the area could benefit from a critical ethnography approach (e.g. Harvey 1990) which focuses on one particular institutional case, yet goes beyond detailed empirical observation typical of conventional ethnography to an exploration of a group which is then situated in a wider social context, or one which begins with structural relationships and then undertakes an ethnographic inquiry.

The 'multiple case' perspective taken in this research study might seem contradictory on a university level since the study was located within one university, the University of Zagreb; however, the University of Zagreb is a decentralised university which means that faculties function as organisationally independent units. The research was conducted at six faculties within the University of Zagreb which were selected as cases of institutions with different completion rates (high, average and low). According to Jensen and Rodgers' (2001, p. 237-239) case study typology, this is an example of comparative case study research where multiple case studies are used for cross-unit comparison, thus enabling an intensive investigation of several instances of the researched phenomenon.

There are several reasons why the University of Zagreb (one of seven universities in Croatia) was selected as the 'umbrella' case study university. Firstly, it is the biggest and oldest university in Croatia and as a result enjoys a prestigious reputation attracting students from across Croatia.

Secondly, the University offers a wide range of academic degree courses leading to Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees in Arts, Biomedicine, Biotechnology, Engineering, Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences, whereas the other six Croatian Universities do not offer such a broad range of subjects. Indeed, many of the courses offered at the University of Zagreb are the only such courses in Croatia. Thirdly, limited existing research on HE participation has also focused on Zagreb University, which enables a comparative perspective; and finally, as someone who is from Zagreb herself, conducting the research in Zagreb was also a financial practicality.

Within the University of Zagreb, the case study faculties were selected according to their retention rates. This choice was made with the aim to observe more clearly the institutional effects which could contribute to students' HE choices and experiences; the assumption being that the institutional characteristics of high retention faculties might be more favourable than those of low. The retention rates were calculated as the difference between the number of students enrolled into the first year of study and the number of those same students in their expected final year of study over three generations (those enrolled in 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003), expressed as a percentage. On the basis of this data, all the faculties within the University were classified into three groups: high, average and low retention, and then from within each group two faculties were randomly selected as representative of the group in question. Since the retention data, provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, consisted of aggregate student data, the retention figures presented are only an approximation. However, the choice of faculties was also triangulated with other Croatian research reporting retention figures (e.g. Staničić and Marušić 1996), as well as through interviews with staff at the selected faculties who confirmed the categorisation. Table 4.1 shows the selected faculties and their retention rates.

Table 4.1 Case study faculties and their retention rates.

Case study	Retention rate 2000/2001	Retention rate 2001/2002	Retention rate 2002/2003	Overall retention estimation
Faculty of Science – Department of Mathematics (MAT)	14.1%	15.1%	23.9%	Low
Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil (MGO)	15.7%	14.6%	13.8%	Low
Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology (FTB)	38.2%	41.4%	47.3%	Average
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (EEC)	48%	48.3%	55%	Average
Faculty of Medicine (MED)	81.9%	88.1%	76.6%	High
School of Design (DES)	87.2%	105% <sup>15</sup>	60.9%	High

According to Stake (1995), there are three different purposes for studying cases: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The intrinsic purpose is linked to the researcher's intrinsic interest in a particular case; the instrumental to examining a case which provides insight into an issue or enables theory refinement; and the collective refers to the study of a number of cases jointly to inquire into a phenomenon. The conducted case study research is 'collective' in Stake's terminology. This collective aspect results from the study's multiple institutional cases perspective aimed at exploring how different institutional practices interrelate with individual characteristics to shape educational choices and experiences.

Finally, the conducted research study took a critical case study approach, as opposed to Yin (2003) who advocates for a positivist case study approach. This study's critical lens is related to the assumption that social injustices are being institutionally created and reinforced.

#### *Choice of mixed methods*

A mixed methods approach was employed in this research study on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, the strength of mixed methods research was recognised in that, although quantitative and qualitative research methods do have certain similarities, such as the

<sup>15</sup> The 105% figure results from the fact that there were fewer students registered in their first year of study than in the same generation's last year of study. Since the student data was aggregate, it is impossible to know whether the student data in the first year refers to the same students in the last year, i.e. the data for the last year may also include students from other generations who have been lagging behind in their progress.

use of empirical observations to address research questions, safeguards incorporated to ensure minimum confirmation bias and an attempt to provide warranted assertions about human beings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.15), they also present two different approaches to research with different purposes whose combination provides varied insights. In this study, the qualitative lens was used to explore student voices and their contexts of meaning, whereas the quantitative approach enabled measurement and comparison of themes students raised, establishing relationships between variables and inference from individual narratives to a wider sample of students who filled in a questionnaire. Combining these perspectives in the study contributed to an empirically richer approach to exploring student choices and experiences, which is particularly relevant for a setting such as Croatia which lacks empirical data on higher education participation. As Miles and Huberman (1994) claim: 'But at bottom, we have to face the fact that numbers and words are *both* needed if we are to understand the world' (p40).

Tashakorri and Teddlie (2003) note that a mixed methods research strategy enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study. In theoretical terms, this study was inspired by a Bourdieuean approach to 'theory as method', rather than theory as a set of statements about the social world that can be supported or contested by empirical evidence (Grenfell and James 2004, p.516). In this sense, the use of a mixed methods approach enabled 'working with theory' on different data levels. In other words, exploring the use of theoretical tools both on the qualitative level of individuals' accounts of their HE practices, as well as the 'confirmatory' quantitative data with regard to themes identified in the qualitative stage of the study.

However, the decision to combine the use of quantitative and qualitative data requires addressing the relationship between methodology/methods and paradigms in order to clarify the theoretical stance which informs such combining. According to one approach, there is no link between methods and paradigms (the a-paradigmatic stance) and both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in one research study. In another, there is a link between methods and paradigms which results in the following two approaches: firstly, that qualitative and quantitative methods should not be mixed because the paradigms underlying them are incompatible (the incompatibility thesis); secondly, that qualitative and quantitative methods can be mixed according to the following four options: a. the complementary strengths thesis - keeping the mixed methods separate, so that the strengths of each paradigmatic position can be realised, b. the dialectic stance, which encourages the purposeful engagement of multiple paradigms and

their assumptions, c. the encouragement of multiple paradigms, but with one type of paradigm best used with one type of study and another with a different type of study, and finally d. the use of a single paradigm as the foundation: pragmatism/transformational-empirical (adapted from Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003).

Judging by the research conducted by Niglas (1999, cited in: Greene and Caracelli, 2003) on paradigms in conducting mixed methods research, researchers using mixed methods tend to ground their inquiry decisions primarily in the nature of the phenomena being investigated and the contexts in which the studies are conducted, i.e. they adopt a pragmatist approach to mixed methods research. This single paradigm approach does indeed sound as the most viable option since there seems to be a certain logic in asserting a connection between the various paradigms and quantitative/qualitative methodology; a positivist is hardly likely to take a qualitative approach in trying to establish generalizations, just as an interpretivist is unlikely to use quantitative methodology in attempting to capture individual meanings. However, as Harvey (1990, p.1) notes, although some methods lend themselves more readily to certain epistemological perspectives, no method of data collection is inherently positivist, phenomenological or critical. In addition, pragmatism has been criticised by House and Howe (1999, cited in: Mertens, 2003) for not answering the question 'Practical for whom and to what end?', as well as for being 'insufficiently reflective' (Greene and Caracelli 2003, p.107) by giving too little consideration to philosophical ideas and traditions.

These criticisms were overcome in this study by taking a Bourdieuan constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism lens, as advocated in Chapter 3. His philosophically reflective approach overcomes the theoretical dualisms inherent in criticisms of mixed methods by viewing practice as resulting from a dialectical relationship between the subjective and objective aspects of human action. Indeed, Bourdieu (1992) comes across as a permissive methodologist: 'combine the most standard statistical analysis with a set of in-depth interviews or ethnographic observation, as I tried to do in *Distinction*' (p.227). Nash (2002) describes this as: 'a theoretically informed account in which the quantitative and qualitative methodological elements of social research are included in an explanatory narrative of social processes' (p.398). Such an approach also resonates with a critical realist perspective: 'Compared to positivism and interpretivism, critical realism endorses or is compatible with a relatively wide range of research methods' (Sayer 2000, p. 19).

The following sections outline the conducted mixed methods strategy in more detail, drawing on Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) definition of a mixed methods study:

A mixed methods study involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study, in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, and involves the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, p.34)

### *Data collection procedures*

This study took a critical multiple-case study approach to explore how students with different types and levels of resources choose their undergraduate course and how they experience and progress in their first year of study. The study collected and analysed quantitative data from existing data sources provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the administered student questionnaires, as well as qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with students and academic staff. This section outlines the stages of the research, the research aim of each stage, the methods of data collection used, as well as sampling procedures.

In the first stage of the research, quantitative data on the social and gender composition of the Croatian student body was collected from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics. This secondary data, obtained from the Bureau's 'ŠV2O' form that students complete upon entry into a HE institution, was available only in hard copy at the Bureau's central office. Therefore, the first step of the research study involved going to this office on several occasions and copying the required data. Access to the office was negotiated via e-mail and telephone contact with the head of the educational statistics division. The information gathered included gender, parental educational level and previous schooling completed with the aim to set the broader context of the study. In addition, information was collected on the proportion of students successfully continuing to their second year of undergraduate study (included generations of students who enrolled into their first year of study in 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003) for the purpose of sampling the case study institutions. This secondary data was collected in November 2006<sup>16</sup>.

Following the selection of the six case study faculties, access to the institutions for the purposes of administering a student questionnaire was negotiated with heads of the faculties in January

---

<sup>16</sup> In the study's proposal, the aim was to compare the social and gender characteristics of students who had successfully enrolled into their course of study and those who had not in order to examine whether there was a social bias at selection; however, information on the social profile of applicants is not available. Such information is only collected by faculties for students who are admitted.

2007. Firstly, an email and letter were sent to the heads of the faculties and then follow-up telephone calls were made to arrange details. The initial email and letter had the same content and they described the purpose of the research study and asked for permission to administer the questionnaire (see Appendix 2.1 for contact email/letter). In most cases, the request was forwarded to directors of study who became the main faculty contact for the research. A copy of the questionnaire was emailed to the institutional contacts and in all of the cases access for questionnaire administration was granted.

At this stage of the research, the aim of the questionnaire was to help select students who would be willing to take part in interviews about their HE choices and experiences. At five out of the six case study faculties, the student questionnaire was administered in January 2007 at a compulsory lecture for first year students<sup>17</sup>. At the EEC, it was administered in March 2007 since student lectures ended soon after the winter break in January and resumed in March<sup>18</sup>. A total of 642 first year undergraduate full-time students completed the questionnaire (see Appendix 7 for questionnaire). At DES this meant the majority of the first year student body (33 out of 35 students); the questionnaire was also completed by the majority of first year students at MED (187 students - 77.9%). However, at the other institutions the numbers varied (45% (81 students) at MGO, 44.2% (84 students) at FTB, 26.3% (171 students) at EEC<sup>19</sup>, 24% (86 students) at MAT.<sup>20</sup> The administered questionnaire was previously piloted in November 2006 on a sample of 62 first year undergraduate students at the Teacher Education Faculty, University of Zagreb. The choice of first year students was informed both by international (e.g. Laing et al. 2005, Byrne and Flood 2005) and Croatian research (Staničić and Marušić (1996) which suggested that withdrawal rates are highest in the first year of study. Indeed, in the 2006/2007 University of Zagreb student prospectus, the university chancellor in her opening note says: 'study success is possible only through continuous and solid work throughout the course of study, and this is especially important in the first year' (2006, p.5). A weakness of the research is that for practical reasons it was not possible to administer the questionnaire at the beginning of the first year, which meant

---

<sup>17</sup> Questionnaire design will be addressed later in the chapter.

<sup>18</sup> There are no lectures in February at Croatian universities. This month is taken as half-term between two semesters (winter and summer) and students usually take exams during this period.

<sup>19</sup> The percentages cited for the faculties are not necessarily representative of attendance levels. For example, at the Faculty of Engineering and Computing students are divided into several groups and the questionnaire was administered to only three of these groups.

<sup>20</sup> The number of students admitted to each faculty in 2006/2007 was as follows: School of Design 35, Faculty of Medicine 240, Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology 190, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing 650, Department of Mathematics 360 and Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil 180.

that the students included in the research were those who had already persisted into the second term of study<sup>21</sup>.

As Miles and Huberman (1994) note: 'Qualitative samples tend to be purposive, rather than random' (p.27). On the basis of the questionnaire, the initial aim was to purposefully select 24 students for in-depth interviews about their educational pathways. It was expected that the selection of students would reflect the gender, social and economic diversity of the student body (12 women and 12 men, 6 women and men who were first generation students in their family and 6 whose parents had completed HE, 4 students per faculty); however the final selection of students was slightly different (see Appendix 3.1 for selected participants). In the end, 28 students were interviewed, 16 women and 12 men, 12 first generation students (6 women and 6 men) and 16 second generation students (10 women and 6 men)<sup>22</sup>; 14 of these students estimated their family's income as 'good', 11 as 'average', one person as 'bad' and two people as 'very bad'. The reasons why the final selection of students was slightly different than initially planned are manifold. Firstly, with regard to the number of students, it was easier to select students from faculties which had a larger student body since more people volunteered for the interviews. Secondly, it was not always possible to select an equal number of first and second generation students since the choice rested upon who volunteered. Thirdly, on two occasions two individuals were contacted who had initially volunteered for the interviews but then did not respond within the time specified. As a result, two other students were contacted, but then the first two students responded positively after all so they were also included in the research. Finally, at the School of Design, a student contacted me through another student whom I had interviewed and told me she would like to talk to me about her student experience, so she was also included in the interviewing process.

All 28 students were individually interviewed in April/May 2007, i.e. in the second term of their first year of study, whereas 25 out of the 28 students were also interviewed in September/October 2007. Out of the three students who were not interviewed for the second time, two had been in telephone contact and answered basic questions regarding their progress. On average, the interviews lasted for an hour, although there were cases when it was less than that and others when the interview took almost two hours.

---

<sup>21</sup> Information on the number of students who left their course in the first term as opposed to the end of the first year is not available. Faculties do not collect this type of information.

<sup>22</sup> Students whose parents had not completed any post-secondary schooling were classified as 'first generation' students, whereas students who had at least one parent with post-secondary schooling were classified as 'second generation' for the purposes of this study.

In addition to student interviews, academic members of staff were also interviewed at the selected faculties in June 2007 (seven in total) with the aim of exploring their experiences at the faculty and how they explained student progress. These interviews lasted for an hour on average and took place at faculty premises. The teachers were selected randomly among academic staff that taught first year students and initial contact was established via email.

In an effort to gain a better appreciation of the case study faculties, I also collected and read faculty prospectuses, the Faculty of Medicine's student magazine, as well as explored faculty web-pages for information on courses, timetables and student activities. Furthermore, meeting students and teachers for interviews at the faculties gave me an opportunity to get a better sense of the spaces they occupy. For example, students at the School of Design described their faculty as an intimate setting and being there myself enabled me to understand what they meant by this, i.e. I saw that it was a small building with classes which resembled a secondary school. On the other hand, students at the EEC talked about their large lecture theatres which I had the opportunity to see, whereas students at MAT complained about the location of their institution which I also struggled to reach since it involved an up-hill thirty minute climb. Finally, Miles and Huberman (1994) encourage so-called 'peripheral sampling' which involves talking 'with people who are not central to the phenomenon, but who are neighbours to it, to people no longer actively involved, to dissidents and renegades and eccentrics' (p34). Although unintentional encounters with people who had studied at one of the case study faculties can hardly be classified as a sampling procedure, conversations with such individuals were useful in clarifying certain issues or verifying identified themes. Table 4.2 summarises the stages of the research and the following two sections examine the questionnaire and interview data collection procedures in more detail.

Table 4.2 Summary of research stages.

STAGE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Contacting the educational division of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics in order to gain access to student information: parental educational level, gender, previous secondary schooling, retention rates (1st to 4th year).</li> <li>-Copying data from files at the Croatian Bureau of Statistics' offices. Selecting case study faculties.</li> <li>-Piloting the student questionnaire at the Teacher Education Faculty (62 students).</li> </ul>
STAGE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Negotiating access to case study faculties.</li> <li>-Administering the questionnaire to 642 students across six faculties at the University of Zagreb.</li> <li>-Selecting students for interviews.</li> </ul>
STAGE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-First interview with 28 students. Transcribing the interviews. Writing student memos.</li> </ul>
STAGE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Interviews with 7 lecturers. Transcribing the interviews.</li> </ul>
STAGE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Second interview with 25 students. Transcribing the interviews. Complementing student memos.</li> </ul>
STAGE 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Analysis of student interview data. Parallel analysis of questionnaire data on the basis of issues raised in the interviews.</li> </ul>

### *Questionnaire data*

The student questionnaire was administered for two main reasons. Firstly, to provide background data and ease the selection of students for the interviews, and secondly to provide a data source which could be used to quantitatively examine themes raised by the students in their interviews, i.e. for triangulation purposes. The questionnaire was administered at a compulsory first year lecture. I was initially introduced to the students by a faculty member as a PhD student who was researching student experiences and I would then briefly tell the students about the research, i.e. that it examined the social profile of the student body, as well as how students choose and experience HE. I explained that the research comprised of a questionnaire which was anonymous, that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any point. I also told the students that the questionnaire was one aspect of the research study and that I would be interested in talking to some of them in more detail about their student experiences at a time that suits them best on faculty premises. I drew their attention to the end of the questionnaire, where students were asked to note their contact details if they

were willing to take part in interviews. Students were selected for the interviews on the basis of their questionnaire responses (gender, parental educational level, estimation of financial status) and contacted using the contact details they provided.

The questionnaire (which had been previously piloted) was completed by 642 students and it took students approximately 30 minutes to complete<sup>23</sup>. The majority of students were 18-19 years of age (85.6%; 20-21: 10.6%, above 21: 3.8%), Croatian (97.6%) and female (50.8%). In addition, the majority indicated not having any special needs (98.7%).

Developing the questionnaire was a complex procedure since the aim was to include as many of the factors relating to HE choice and progress which were identified in the reviewed literature in order to be able to quantitatively examine themes which students might raise in their interviews. On the other hand, time and space constraints had to be considered. The questionnaire's final version included 53 questions grouped according to nine themes. Table 4.3 presents a summary of the themes and relevant questionnaire items.

---

<sup>23</sup> Some of the students complained that the questionnaire was too long. For future research on this topic, it would be useful to revise the questionnaire based on the interviews and make it more focused.

Table 4.3 Questionnaire themes and items addressing them.

Theme	Item
Characteristics of previous schooling	Type of secondary school completed; Place where the secondary school was completed; Grade point average in the fourth year of secondary schooling; Overall matura grade; Preparedness for the enrolled course.
Characteristics of enrolled institution	Enrolled faculty; Gender appropriateness of the course; Expectations and whether they have been met; Satisfaction with course and whether they would enrol into it again; What worries them about the course; What makes them happy about the course.
Financial resources	Student fee-paying status; Type of home; Size of home; Home furnishings indicating material wealth; Occupation of parents; Parents' employment status; Parents' work status; Estimation of family income; Source of financial support.
Cultural resources	Parents influencing choice of course; Home furnishings indicating cultural wealth; Parental educational level; Topics of conversation with parents; Reading habits; Music tastes; Film tastes; Free time activities.
Social resources	People influencing choice of course; Topics of conversation with friends.
Living arrangements	Place of living before enrolling into the course; Where one lives now; Satisfaction with living conditions.
Motivation	Intrinsic/extrinsic for both decision to continue to higher education and choice of course; Time of decision for both decision to continue to higher education and choice of course; Hierarchy of course choice.
Labour market	Motivation: continuing to HE because it increases employability, choosing a particular course because of increased employability, preparing for a particular occupation.
General information	Extra points at enrolment; Age; Citizenship; Gender; Special needs.

The majority of the questions in the questionnaire were closed. However, for more detail on specific themes several open-ended questions were also included.

The recognised strength of the questionnaire as a method for collecting data was that it gave access to a larger sample of participants as well as enabled the possibility of finding patterns in their responses. However, the major drawback of this method of data collection in a single method study is that the information gathered is necessarily constrained by the researcher's preconceptions (Johnson and Turner 2003). In relation to this, as Couldry (2005) observes, for Bourdieu there is a 'misleading neutrality of a structured questionnaire or survey that reinforces rather than softens the power differential between interviewer and respondent' (p.363). This was identified as particularly problematic in this study, since HE participation is an under-researched topic in Croatia. As a result, the literature shaping the questionnaire items was significantly based on research conducted in HE contexts different from the Croatian one (e.g. Byrne and Flood 2005, Rhodes and Nevill 2004). A qualitative lens was deemed crucial in this respect.

As a contribution to overcoming the power differential between the researcher and the respondents, in this study the interview data informed the questionnaire analysis. That is, the questionnaire was developed as an amalgam of different themes identified in the reviewed HE participation literature and its important aspects were then qualitatively guided by the interviews. For example, the interviews suggested that students who had completed vocational schooling were experiencing more educational difficulties than their counterparts with completed grammar schooling. To examine this quantitatively, analysis was conducted on the relationship between attended secondary school and expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study. The results showed that in comparison to grammar school pupils, a higher proportion of vocational school pupils did not expect to enrol into their second year of study successfully. In other words, the quantitative data was used to examine the qualitative findings.

The questionnaire data was analysed using the SPSS 15.0 statistical package. Items in the questionnaire which were analysed used nominal and ordinal scales, therefore non-parametric procedures were applied throughout. These included the Mann-Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test for the testing of significance of differences between two (Mann-Whitney) or more (Kruskal Wallis) groups, and Spearman's rank order correlation for examining the relationship between two variables. Frequencies and cross tabulations were also used. Significance levels ( $p$ ) will be reported to three decimal places and effects will be considered significant if  $p < .05$ .

Patton's (1987, cited in: Johnson and Turner, 2003) classification of interviews distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative interviews, where the qualitative are further subdivided into informal conversational, interview guide and standardized open-ended interviewing. These roughly correspond to the often mentioned categories of unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. The type of interviews conducted in this research was semi-structured. Structured interviews were identified as constraining in a study which aimed to open up spaces for people to talk about educational experiences, whereas unstructured interviews were seen as problematic in relation to the time available. The latter would have been more appropriate in an ethnographic study. Semi-structured interviews were identified as useful for comparing individuals and groups of individuals, as well as giving students the opportunity to broaden and deepen their accounts. However, a difference could be observed between the student and teacher interviews. Whereas the student interviews usually spilled over into 'purposeful conversations' (Smyth and Hattam 2001, p.407), the interviews with teachers were more formal and tended to keep to the interview schedule.

The first interview with all the students took place on faculty premises with the aim to locate the interview in a space the students would be familiar with. However, for the second interview some students expressed a preference to meet at a café or they wanted to come to the Institute for Social Research, so the location varied. At the first interview I told students more about myself and my PhD research and they often asked questions about where I came from and where I graduated from which I felt contributed to an informal tone in the interviews. I concluded that my age also contributed to students not addressing me formally; in the Croatian language there is a distinction between 'ti' and 'vi', both of which can be translated as 'you' with the former signalling informality and the latter formality. The majority of the students addressed me with 'ti' which I took as a sign that they did not perceive me as a senior.

At the beginning of the first interview, I explained to the students that confidentiality would be ensured by use of pseudonyms and emphasized that their participation was voluntary. I also asked students to sign a consent form (see Appendix 4) and provided them with a signed copy of it since it included my commitment to keep their answers confidential. In the introductory part of the interview, I also asked students for permission to record the interviews and they all agreed to this.

The aim of the first interview was to explore students' decisions to continue to HE, their choice of university and course, as well as their course experiences up to that point (see Appendix 5.1 for first interview schedule). A particular focus was on identifying the resources that have influenced these students' practices. Open-ended questions were used throughout the interview such as 'can you tell me the story of how you came to this university and course', 'could you describe your first week at university for me' or 'what do you think about your course so far' in order to give students the space to develop their own accounts. As Bryman notes, 'In qualitative interviewing, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers' (2001, p.313). More specific questions were used for clarification purposes or further detail. At the end of the first interview, I asked students whether they would be willing to take photographs of their student life as discussion material for the second interview and I explained that this was not obligatory. All of the students agreed to take photographs and this idea was particularly welcomed by students from the School of Design who had photography as part of their course. Most of the students took the disposable camera I had brought for them, whereas others said they would prefer to use their digital cameras and record the photographs on a CD.

The second interview focused on students' educational experiences during their first year of study, the reasons for their (un)successful enrolment into the second year of study and their future educational and/or career plans (see Appendix 5.2 for second interview schedule). Informed consent was renegotiated for the purposes of the second interview. Although initially all the students agreed to the idea of taking photographs, in the end only ten of them did so. The reasons students gave for not taking photographs were mostly related to not knowing what to take photographs of. In this sense, giving students more specific instructions, such as to take photographs of the positive and negative aspects of student life may have been more conducive to the task. The students who did take photographs gave me the opportunity to see rather than visualise or hear about the spaces they occupy, the people they spend time with and the importance they attach to various aspects of their student life. This contributed to a better understanding of their student lifestyles. In addition, photo elicitation contributed to the aim of providing students with a space to impose the themes they deemed relevant to their experiences.

In total, 53 interviews were conducted with students which resulted in approximately 50 hours of recorded material. The interviews were fully transcribed with the aid of the Express Scribe programme and analysed using NVivo software.

While the main focus of the research was on student experiences, I also wanted to explore how lecturers experience their professional setting and what they see as important factors in determining student progress. The aim of these interviews was to see whether the interviewed teachers could anticipate some of the issues raised by the students. Since the final aim of study was to draw recommendations on how institutions could support students to succeed, it was important to identify the level of institutional awareness of the barriers experienced by students. The seven teacher interviews were semi-structured and on average lasted for an hour (see Appendix 5.3 for interview schedule). Just as with the student interviews, the teachers were guaranteed confidentiality and asked for permission for the interviews to be recorded. The interviews were fully transcribed with the Express Scribe programme and selected extracts which refer to student experiences have been translated and included in the data analysis chapters. With regard to translation, an important point needs to be made both with regard to the student and teacher interviews. That is, as Bourdieu et al. (1999) noted 'Transcription already transforms the oral discussion decisively' (p.1) and translation takes this transformation further. Although I tried to translate the selected interview excerpts with minimal distortion, unfortunately the English translation cannot capture regional accents nor certain language specific phrases.

Miles and Huberman (1994) mention six analytic moves in analysing qualitative data: (1) affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from interviews, (2) noting reflections or other remarks in the margins, (3) sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, common sequences, (4) isolating patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection, (5) gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover consistencies discerned in the database, and (6) confronting those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories (p.9).

The analysis of interview data in this study roughly followed these six steps and built on them from a more grounded perspective. Firstly, during the process of transcribing the student interviews short memos were written for each student in an effort to sketch individual student vignettes. These memos consisted of basic student questionnaire information (e.g. which school they completed, parents' educational level, estimation of family income, whether they expected to enrol into the second year of study successfully), the notes I took about the student interview (e.g. I noticed how some students who described their course as demanding had planners which

they would refer to when talking about their student lifestyle, whereas a student who described his course as easy was skipping class when we met), as well as a general summary about the student's educational choices and experiences as based on the interview. I returned to these memos throughout the data analysis for a narrative and contextual perspective.

Secondly, open codes ('free nodes' in NVivo or 'descriptive' codes according to Miles and Huberman (1994)) were assigned to the transcribed interviews. Against Miles and Huberman's or Richards' (2006) advice to identify potentially useful codes before the actual coding process, codes were developed in a grounded way in order to minimise the researcher 'imposition effect' (Kenway and McLeod 2004). In the beginning I noticed repetition with some of the codes, so codes were merged and others were re-named; and in the final version of the coding frame there were 88 codes (see Appendix 6 for the coding frame). Thirdly, as the open codes were being assigned a parallel process of relating them to each other took place and open codes were being grouped under overarching codes ('tree' nodes in NVivo or 'interpretative' codes according to Miles and Huberman (1994)). In the final version, there were 11 such codes. In addition, there was a final code which was entitled 'miscellaneous' and consisted of open codes which could not be assigned to any of the overarching codes. It is important to note that although the open codes were inductively assigned (i.e. there was no 'start list' of codes), as the open coding progressed the identification of their relationship resonated with concepts identified in the literature (e.g. cultural or social capital), so such 'familiar' labels were assigned to them. Indeed, similarities and differences with other HE participation findings were discernable and this contributed to a gradual elaboration of analytic generalisations which were then related to the quantitative data where possible, as well as previous participation research.

The aim of the interviews was to illustrate the details of HE participation and it was interesting to observe how the interview data could inform changes to the questionnaire. For example, whereas in the questionnaire students were asked to mark the extent to which they agreed that their secondary schooling had prepared them for their enrolled course, the interview coding resulted in a distinction between, on the one hand, secondary school content acquired and, on the other, working habits students had developed in secondary school. In addition, whereas social resources were operationalised in the questionnaire as family, friends and educational officials in relation to course choice and support with progress, interview codes also identified a practice called the 'Jump' at the MGO as a social resource, as well as the importance of social contacts not just in educational terms, but also for obtaining student accommodation and employment.

Finally, it was interesting to observe how the interview results and the questionnaire data reinforced each other in the majority of cases. The questionnaire data analysis was lead by the analysis of the interview data; the purpose of the questionnaire data at this stage of the study can be described as follows: 'During *analysis* quantitative data can help by showing the generality of specific observations' and 'correcting the 'holistic fallacy' (monolithic judgements about a case)' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.41). Although the conclusions I made on the basis of the interview data were cross-checked within the interview data itself (e.g. the first student interview with the second and comparison of interview data from students at the same faculty), the questionnaire data reinforced these conclusions.

### *Data quality*

According to Black (2002), data quality is judged by indicators of reliability, validity and objectivity. However, this terminology seems more appropriate for a quantitative rather than qualitative or mixed methods lens. In this respect, although Black's suggested terms are used in this section as a framework for considering data quality, it is recognised that a term such as 'reflexivity' (e.g. Bourdieu 1992) needs to be added to his list<sup>24</sup>.

To ensure the reliability of the data collected, as a requirement that if someone else did the proposed research they would get the same results and arrive at the same conclusions (Yin 2003, Denscombe 2003), triangulation procedures were undertaken as a way of ensuring data collection and analysis consistency. In other words, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used which were cross-checked against each other. For example, the results of the questionnaire on the social profile of the student body was compared to data provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, findings from the student interviews analysis were checked against the quantitative data and conclusions from the first interview with students were checked with students at their second interview.

Yin (2003) raises three issues concerning validity which need to be addressed in case study research. Firstly, construct validity which requires the establishment of correct operational measures for the concepts being studied; secondly, internal validity relating to the possibility of

---

<sup>24</sup> It can be argued, however, that 'reflexivity' should also be an integral part of a quantitative research design.

establishing causal relationships; and thirdly, external validity which refers to the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised.

Construct validity refers to how well an abstract concept such as, for example, 'cultural capital' is operationalised in the research, since this directly impacts on how well it is measured (Black 2002). Bryman (2001) defines this as 'The degree to which a measure of a concept truly reflects that concept' (p.505). Since this study was informed by Bourdieu's relational framework, most of the concepts' validity was verified through a grounded identification of their properties in the study's qualitative stage. For example, although attended secondary schooling was operationalised on the basis of existing literature as an indicator of cultural capital in the questionnaire, such an operationalisation was always provisional since secondary schooling only becomes cultural capital if recognised by the field in question. In this respect, the qualitative data enabled an observation of the relational aspect of Bourdieu's concepts.

With regards to internal validity, the theoretical lens taken in this research was not concerned with the possibility of establishing 'causal' relationships, but rather associations. In relation to external validity, this is a particularly important issue in case study research with its purposive sampling of cases. The credibility of possible generalizations made from the proposed research study is addressed to a certain extent by the use of a multiple-case study and multiple research methods approach, as well as the provision of rich data so that the readers and users of the research can determine its transferability. Having said this, it is acknowledged that the research is located in only six faculties within one university in Croatia. Therefore, findings and conclusions were corroborated within the broader framework provided by the literature review, the aim being to provide analytic rather than sample-to-population generalizations.

Three final points need to be made. Firstly, to ensure that the questionnaire was designed in a way that it had clear, unambiguous questions (Black 2002), a questionnaire pilot study was conducted which informed modifications to the final questionnaire. In addition, I encouraged students participating in the qualitative part of the study to comment on the research process, as a contribution to the effort of making the research a reflexive process. Comments included negative feedback about the length of the questionnaire, as well as positive feedback about the interviews; for example, students would say at the end of the interview that they enjoyed our conversation.

Secondly, since the conducted research was influenced by Bourdieu's theoretical and empirical work, it was difficult not to notice what Wacquant (1992) has described as Bourdieu's 'signature obsession with reflexivity'. According to Bourdieu (1992), there are three types of biases that may blur the 'sociological gaze': social origins and coordinates of the individual researcher (class, gender, ethnicity), position in the academic field (in the objective space of possible intellectual positions offered to him) and intellectual bias (which entices us to construe the world as a spectacle rather than concrete problem to be solved practically) (p.39). However, as Black (2002) has noted: 'it is impossible to separate researchers from their beliefs, particularly since they are often the motivation for carrying out the research in the first place' (p.219).

In relation to reflexivity, there is an apparent contradiction between Black's use of 'objectivity' as an indicator of data quality and his acknowledgment of the impossibility of separating researchers from their beliefs. In relation to this objectivity-subjectivity issue, parallel to discovering what I was bringing to the research in its different phases, I am also aware that I brought to the research aspects of my dispositions I am not aware of. However, the study's mixed methods approach, triangulation procedures and grounding in other higher education participation literature and theory are seen as contributing to minimising my presence in the study. The issue of researcher reflexivity is addressed in more detail in this chapter's final section.

### *Research ethics*

The study's research ethics will be considered on four levels: access, informed consent, confidentiality and reciprocity.

Access to the case study faculties in order to administer the student questionnaire was carefully negotiated initially with the heads of the faculties and then with directors of study. A fortunate circumstance that may have contributed to ease of access was my affiliation with the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb with which the University of Zagreb has traditionally cooperated. Access was granted soon after initial contact was established via e-mail and letter and I was introduced to the students by the designated faculty contact.

Informed consent has been described as the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in a research study after being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decision (e.g. Cohen et al. 2000). In this study, it was recognised that informed consent

would have to be renegotiated throughout the research. The initial moment of informed consent for the interview stage was the section in the questionnaire which asked students to indicate whether they would be interested in having a more active role in the research. The questionnaire included a short summary of the proposed research; however, when I first met with the students who expressed initial interest, a more in-depth explanation of their role in the research was given. I told students that I was interested in how they made their choice of course (in order to expand on questionnaire findings), as well as how they were experiencing their first year of study and explained their involvement would include two interview sessions and possibly e-mail contact. I explained to the students that they were free not to take part in the research at any moment. Following that, students were asked to sign a consent form, a signed copy of which they also received since it guaranteed the confidentiality of the interviews. This procedure was repeated for the second interview. Confidentiality was also considered an important aspect of the teachers' interviews. Indeed, pseudonyms have been used to ensure that none of the participants can be identified. With regard to the photographs students took as an interview aid for the second interview, consent was negotiated for using selected photographs as illustrations in the thesis.

Finally, I wanted the research participants to benefit from their involvement in the research study. I was aware that the long term benefits that the study hopes to achieve with regards to improving student experiences and contributing to equal opportunities to and in HE would not directly affect my research participants. Therefore, I tried to give them something back for their participation through more immediate benefits. As a qualified English teacher, I offered to help them with their English lessons and several students contacted me with English language questions. In addition, having gone through the application procedure for scholarships to study in England, I offered advice to students who expressed an interest in further study opportunities abroad. Also, the project I was affiliated with at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb evaluated the Bologna policy implementation process in Croatia. Since the interviewed students were the second generation of students enrolling according to the new system, I was also a useful source of information for them. Finally, all the students who participated in the interviews were given 150 kuna [approx. 20 pounds] for their participation. In addition, individual reports on the case study faculties have been promised to the faculty staff involved in the research. These individual reports will include institutional strengths as identified by the students, as well as those institutional aspects which the research identified as requiring improvement.

## *Reflexivity*

Two quotes are the starting point for this section on researcher reflexivity:

...the viewpoints of agents will vary systematically with the point they occupy in objective social space (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.11).

The true freedom that sociology offers is to give us a small chance of knowing what game we play and of minimizing the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve, as well as by the embodied social forces that operate from within us (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.198).

I selected these two quotes to illustrate Bourdieu's pessimistic and optimistic understanding of agents and to relate them to the issue of researcher reflexivity: the first quote suggests that agents' (and this includes researchers') views are constrained by their social position, whereas the second quote offers the possibility of minimizing 'the embodied social forces that operate within us' through sociological self-analysis. Both these quotes have influenced how I have approached this study in terms of reflexivity. That is, I recognize that aspects of this study are necessarily constrained by my own position and disposition, but I have also reflected on the ways in which as a researcher I affect this study and sociological tools have contributed to this reflexivity.

Such reflexivity has been both theoretical/independent and practical/relational. By theoretical or independent I mean a self-induced reflexivity informed by Bourdieu's identified sources of bias which 'may blur the sociological gaze' (1992, p.39). These include the 'obvious' bias of social origins, but also positioning in the academic field, and intellectual bias or what Bourdieu describes as construing 'the world as a spectacle rather than a concrete problem to be solved practically' (1992, p.39). With regard to my social bias, I am a second generation student who had the privilege to draw on inherited capitals (cultural, social, economic and emotional) throughout her schooling. In this study, I have been aware of the need to break with my own embodied common sense understanding of students who share a similar background to my own, as well as the sensitivity required to explore the experiences of students whose social background differs from mine. Data triangulation has made me more at ease with the judgments I have made since I have been particularly cautious about conclusions made on behalf of those whose experiences I have not shared. As a member of the dominant ethnic majority in Croatia I concluded that my ethnicity would not be a prominent issue with the researched dominant majority. However, if the

research focus had been the experiences of ethnic minority students in the HE system, this difference would have required addressing in more depth. In relation to gender, my experiences as a female student were brought into the study (e.g. attentiveness to how female students are treated by male staff), but I reflected on the complex interrelationship between gender and class and the risk of projecting a gender biased perspective. Again, data triangulation was useful in this respect.

Irrespective of my 'independent' sociological theorising on my research practice, a 'relational' reflexivity also imposed itself through the interviewees. For example, it would be difficult to argue that accents are classed in Croatia as Bernstein (e.g.1977) would suggest for the English context. In this linguistic sense, I did not expect students to feel a social distance towards me. However, I did not consider the regional variation in accents and how that might influence the way in which students perceive me. This was brought to my attention in my first interview with Katarina, a student from a coastal Croatian city, who said 'you people from Zagreb', which made me aware that I was being regionally categorised. Further instances of such relational reflexivity included students using 'ti' when talking to me which suggests they were not concerned with the age gap between us. In other words, at least linguistically there were no suggestions of a hierarchical relationship. In addition, I noticed that mentioning to students how I had attended my undergraduate studies at the University of Zagreb positioned me as more of an insider. One student commented 'I guess you know what it's like'. However, in order to address the risk of 'assumed knowledge', I nevertheless asked students for clarifications.

With regard to positioning in the academic field, although Bourdieu (1992) acknowledges the importance of reflecting on one's social and personal coordinates as a researcher and contends that the research relationship is a social relationship (Bourdieu et al. 1999), he finds reflexivity about one's position in the academic field to be more important. According to Bourdieu (1992) there is a 'peculiar antinomy of the pedagogy of research' (p.249):

It must transmit both tested instruments of constructions of reality (problematics, concepts, techniques, methods) *and* a formidable critical disposition, an inclination to question ruthlessly those instruments (1992, p.249).

As a researcher I occupy two different academic fields. In the Croatian field of sociology of education this study has meant questioning and breaking with the dominant functionalist and quantitative approach. On the other hand, engaging with a Bourdieuean theoretical lens in a

theoretically and methodologically more varied English higher education context has required a critical disposition towards 'instruments' developed in one social setting and applied to a different one. Contributions to such theoretical reflexivity have included: my theoretical engagement with sociological theories explaining social differences in education, Bourdieu's theoretical tools, work which draws on Bourdieu and critiques it and through my empirical engagement with his concepts. As the data analysis chapters will illustrate, such questioning of his theoretical tools has lead to their elaboration.

Finally, a third source of bias for Bourdieu (1992) is intellectual bias. My understanding of this source of bias is research which could be qualified as 'l'art pour l'art', i.e. research for research's sake. However, the focal point of this study has been students, their educational experiences and the ways in which these experiences could be improved. In this sense, the aim of the research is to further sociological theorising on social inequalities in education and identify measures to address them.

As a conclusion to this chapter, the study has worked with Bourdieu's theoretical lens through a mixed methods approach. More specifically, it has drawn on multiple data gathered in the academic year 2006/2007: statistical data including information for all students at Croatian universities (e.g. parental educational level), questionnaire data from 642 students at six case study faculties, and interview data and visual materials collected from 28 students at the same six faculties whose progress was followed during their first year of study. Triangulation procedures were identified as contributing to the quality of the collected data and steps were taken to ensure an ethical approach to researching students' choices and experiences. One of these steps has also included developing a reflexive perspective in the study.

**PART 2**  
**STUDENT VOICES**

### 'MY DAD STUDIED HERE TOO'

Despite Bourdieu's relatively broad conceptualization of cultural capital as embodied, institutionalised and objectified, Lareau and Weininger (2003) have identified a tendency in educational research to use a much narrower understanding of cultural capital, spelling it out in terms of 'highbrow' status practices. For example, measurements of cultural capital for DiMaggio (1982) include an interest in art, music, literature, attending arts events and cultural knowledge (e.g. famous composers). This conception is similar to that of Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Robert (1990), who refer to cultural capital in terms of cultural consumption as measured by theatre and museum visits, as well as reading behaviour, and such a conception can also be found in more recent works by authors such as Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) and Sullivan (2001). In their article on cultural capital, Lareau and Weininger (2003) argue for a less limited understanding of cultural capital along the lines of Reay's (2004, 2005) use of the concept which not only includes the directly measurable aspects of cultural capital (e.g. educational qualifications), but also its qualitative dimensions and subjective aspects, such as levels of confidence and entitlement. In addition, Lareau and Weininger (2003) emphasize the importance of examining the institutional practices which reward different aspects of cultural capital, since there is a strong sense that educational research on cultural capital has focused more on the (non)possession of cultural capital as a strength/weakness of the individual, rather than on scrutinizing the institutional effects which reinforce its (non)possession. According to the authors, studies should explore the micro-interactional processes 'whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills and competences comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation' (2003, p.569).

This chapter contributes to the process of understanding the HE pathways of the interviewed Croatian students by discussing instances of cultural capital as identified in the researched education context. These instances have been classified according to Bourdieu's distinction between the three forms of cultural capital: parental educational level, parental educational support and type of completed secondary schooling were identified as indicators of cultural capital in its institutionalized state, available study materials as the objectified state and vocabulary and eloquence as linguistic cultural capital. By drawing on such a grounded identification of cultural capital workings, its conceptualisation goes beyond its traditional expression as 'beaux arts' participation, although the interview and questionnaire data are used to highlight that aspect of cultural capital, too. However, the traditional conceptualization of cultural capital was not

identified as educationally relevant in the conducted interviews, which could be related to the fact that the research was conducted with students studying medicine, design, engineering and science and technology; confirming DiMaggio's (1982) impression that cultural capital (understood as 'prestigious' cultural practices) does not seem to exercise a significant effect on students' grades in technical subjects. In addition to discussing both the objective and subjective repercussions of cultural capital (non)possession across faculties, this chapter also considers and revises the concept's theoretical premises.

### *Parental influence*

Cultural capital in its institutionalized state is often conceptualised in HE participation literature, which draws on Bourdieu's theoretical framework, as parents' educational level and how this shapes an individual's educational disposition (e.g. Brooks 2003, Simonova 2003). One of the conclusions is that students whose parents have obtained a university degree are themselves more likely to continue to HE and successfully complete their studies, since this is their 'commonplace destiny' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979, p.5). And indeed, in this study, 64 per cent of the students who completed the questionnaire were second generation students<sup>25</sup>.

This embodied aspect of cultural capital transmission came across in several of the student interviews. For example, Rebeka (SG), speaking about her choice of medicine, says: 'My grandfather is a vet, my grandmother was a head nurse, my dad studied here too, so I have been surrounded by this all my life'. It seems that for Rebeka, continuation to HE and the enrolled medical course was a natural progression. Likewise, for Ružica (SG, MGO) going to university was the 'normal' thing to do:

*When I enrolled into secondary school I already knew I was going to go to university. I don't know, as if that was normal, normal that you go from primary into secondary education and then into university. I don't know. That's what one sister did, that's what the other did, that's what my mum did.*

Both Rebeka's and Ružica's accounts of their continuation to HE suggest a 'doxic' educational orientation shaped by their family's educational histories. In this sense, their interview excerpts

---

<sup>25</sup> For the purposes of this study, second generation students have been identified as those who have at least one parent with post-secondary schooling, i.e. a university degree or a professional higher education degree. A more detailed examination of the educational level of students' parents shows that 1.5% of fathers and 4.2% of mothers have up to secondary schooling, 44% of fathers and 48.9% of mothers have completed secondary school education and 54.5% of fathers and 46.9% of mothers have post-secondary schooling.

illustrate the workings of habitus understood 'as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions' (Bourdieu 1977, p.72). Indeed, as a result of their family's educational past, both students drift into HE in the present as part of a 'default' educational biography.

This is a stark difference from the reasons to study quoted by certain first generation students. Lovro (FG, FTB), for instance, says that he continued to HE because 'I don't want to be in a financial situation like my parents', whereas for Fran (FG, FTB): 'I want to get the knowledge I'll need in the future because technology requires less and less manual workers'. In other words, for these students the decision to continue to HE relates to them 'breaking' with their family histories rather than continuing them. These illustrated differences between first and second generation students resonate with the findings of Reay, David and Ball (2005) which showed that for students with a middle class background the decision to go to university was rather a 'non-decision', which contrasts with first generation students for whom it involved deliberate decision making. The following interview excerpt from Fabijan (FG, MED) illustrates further the 'normality' of continuing to HE for second in comparison to first generation students. He says:

My parents didn't have the opportunity to study because their parents, they were a peasant family, wouldn't let them. They had to get married early and all the other traditions...whereas my friends, I mentioned to you my friend whose father is on a high position, studying for them is normal, because thirty years ago his father was living in a place where it was relatively normal for him to study, while for my parents it's like wow he's going to Zagreb.

Fabijan's extract highlights the 'hereditary' aspect of educational pathways which has a spatial dimension to it. That is, Fabijan draws on the rural-urban distinction in his account, suggesting that the opportunity to continue to HE may be even more difficult for a first generation student from a village rather than a city.

The family's role with regard to students' continuation to HE was explored in the student questionnaire with the question 'Why did you decide to continue to higher education?', where one of the options was 'because my family wanted me to'. The students were provided with seven options and were asked to choose a maximum of three which they felt reflected their motivation best. These included: because my family wanted me to, because that's what most of my friends did, because I think a degree will increase my chances of employment, because I think that a degree will give me high status in society, because I want to continue developing my

intellectual skills, because I didn't know what else to do and because of student rights (e.g. healthcare). The results showed that employment (87.2%) and intellectual development (74.8%) were the two most cited reasons (see Figure 5.1)<sup>26</sup>.

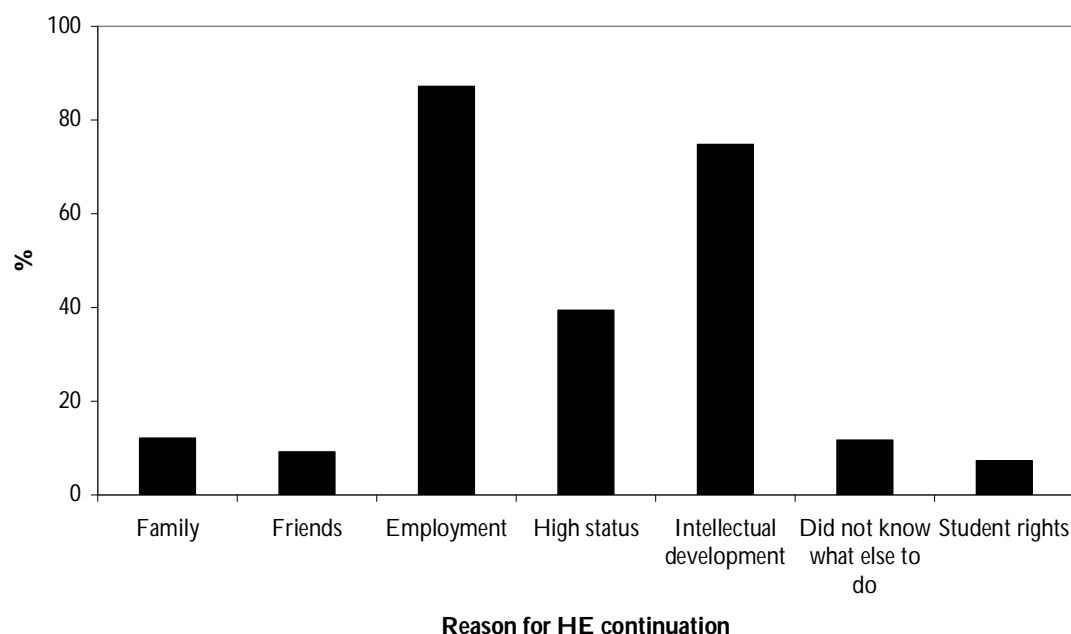


Figure 5.1 Reasons students quoted for why they continued to higher education.

\* Students could select up to three reasons from the list of options.

The output of the Mann Whitney test indicated no statistically significant difference ( $U = 44177.5$ ,  $z = -1.761$ ,  $p = .078$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to students' estimation of parental influence. These results suggest support for the claim that for second generation students, such as Rebeka and Ružica, university education is taken for granted, illustrating Bourdieu's (1984) contention that:

The schemes of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective, scrutiny or control by the will (p.466).

The role of the family with regard to choice of course was also explored in the student questionnaire. This was addressed with two questions. The first one asked students to determine the extent to which particular people influenced their choice (four-point Likert-type scale ranging

<sup>26</sup> Employment as a motivating factor for continuing to higher education has been recognised across higher education participation literature (e.g. Ilišin 2008, Rhodes and Nevill 2004, Connor 2001). For example, Finocchietti (2004) finds that in Italy 'employment is ranked first in the motivations that push towards university studies' (p.466). This issue is addressed in more detail in Chapter 9 'The playing fields'.

from 'not at all' to 'fully') and the following options were provided: parents, family friends, partner, sibling, grandparent, friends, secondary school teacher and professional advisor. The second question explored students' motivation to study the particular course. Students were asked to mark a maximum of three reasons why they decided on the enrolled course: because my family wanted me to, because my friends enrolled into this course, because of employment opportunities, because of interest in course content, because I think that completing this course will give me high status in society, because I didn't know what else to study and because this course will prepare me for my future job.

In relation to the first question, 23.1 per cent of students reported their parents had 'mostly' influenced their choice of course and 3.5 per cent marked 'very much so'. However, for the majority of students, the influence of parents was not significant. The output of the Mann Whitney test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference ( $U = 45093.0$ ,  $z = -.355$ ,  $p = .722$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to whether parents had influenced choice of course. As for the second question, similarly to their answers regarding motivation to continue to HE, the majority of students reported it was because they were interested in the course (79.3%) and because of employment opportunities (65.6%). Unlike with the previous question where students were asked to mark the extent of their parents' influence, in this question they had to prioritize between different options and here fewer students identified their family's influence as important. That is, only 11.2 per cent of students indicated that option. Again the Mann Whitney test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference ( $U = 45919.5$ ,  $z = -.395$ ,  $p = .693$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to this response, which confirms the previous finding.

A potential explanation for these results can be identified in the student interviews. That is, most first and second generation students said that their parents did not interfere with their choice of course. For example, Damir (SG, MAT) says: 'it was important for them that I study...but with regard to the decision what to study, they never had any...it's your life and I don't have the right to talk about it'. Similarly, Sonja (SG, MAT) said that her parents told her to make a decision and they would support it, and Marko (FG, EEC) remarked about his mother: 'it's not that she wasn't interested she just didn't want to meddle. Of course she was interested which courses I would apply to, but she didn't influence me...she didn't say don't go to FER [EEC], study medicine or something else'. Jelena (FG) at the same faculty says that her parents told her to choose what she wanted herself, so that they could not be blamed later.

Although none of the students interviewed reported that their parents had directly influenced their choice of course, there was a sense in some of the interviews that parents, particularly of second generation students, had certain expectations. For example, Mathea's (SG, DES) mother, who has a business degree and runs a book keeping company, told Mathea how some of her friends were surprised she was not going to study business like her mother. Mathea says: 'I mean people expect you to inherit the family business and do what your parents do'. Similarly, Željka's (SG, DES) parents expected her to study a course in the humanities. She talks about how her mother teaches German and her father is a journalist and how:

*They always thought I'd study something similar...and then when I told them I wanted to study design or the art academy they were a bit...I think they thought I'd get over it...but then they saw I was working more for that than for anything else in my education and they realised I really wanted that, so they started to encourage me.*

Although in these cases the students ended up studying what they wanted to, their excerpts illustrate the possibility of different degrees of educational reproduction. That is, whereas for some students their educational disposition is expressed as an embodied expectation to continue to HE on a more general level, for other students it is more specific and involves a particular educational choice. For example, for Tanja (SG, EEC) it was 'normal' to study at the EEC because her dad had graduated there and obtained his master's degree there as well.

### *Parental support*

Judging by the student responses, inherited institutionalised cultural capital also exerts its influences more 'tangibly' in the case of students whose parents can provide them with academic support during their course of study. In other words, second generation students do not only have an 'embodied', but also a 'practical' advantage over their first generation counterparts. This is captured by Hatcher's (1998) understanding of cultural capital as middle class parents' know-how to manage the educational system better and provide help with their children's schoolwork. For example, Mladen (SG) says:

I have a friend whose dad would call him every day when we were taking the anatomy exam and would ask him questions and would explain stuff to him. That's extra encouragement. I don't

have anyone to talk to apart from my friends, who don't want to talk about it while we're out having coffee.

Mladen's quote illustrates the privilege enjoyed by students whose parents can provide practical help during their studies, but it also draws attention to different degrees of such cultural capital. That is, although Mladen's father has the same level of education as his friend's father, he cannot provide the educational support the other father can. In other words, it is not just the educational level of parents that matters, but also knowledge of specialized fields. This can be further illustrated with an excerpt from Željka's (SG, DES) interview. Although both her parents completed HE, neither of them studied for a design-related degree. As a result, Željka says: 'it's silly that I sometimes cannot talk to them about some of these [course] things', relating her parents' lack of ability to help with other friends on the course whose parents are a source of educational support. For example, one of her friend's father is an art historian and helps with his daughter's work. Such privilege of having a parent who completed the same course of study also comes up in Tanja's (SG, EEC) interview:

I do most things myself, apart from programming because he's [father] really good at it. And sometimes I ask him a few questions, but really I do most things on my own. I can also ask him about some teachers and he knows what they're like.

Similarly to Tanja, Rebeka's (SG, MED) father also completed the same course of study as his daughter and he has some of the books she needs, which are a scarce resource in the faculty library. Her example illustrates the interrelationship between parental educational level and objectified cultural capital (in this context identified as specialized books), which for first generation students, or even second generation students whose parents have not studied at the same faculty, is less of a possibility. Rebeka's example also shows how institutional aspects, such as a library which is not very well-equipped, can reinforce the importance of possessing cultural capital in its identified objectified form and how it privileges those with access to it.

An aspect of parental support which was examined in the student questionnaire was how often students talked to their parents about their studies (on a scale from 'never' to 'often'); the results showed that the majority of students (70.5%) 'often' did so. The questionnaire data also enabled an examination of whether there was a relationship between how often students discussed their studies with their parents and their expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study. Although an isolated examination of the relationship between these two variables can only

indicate an association between them, Spearman's rank order correlation was found to be significant and positive,  $r(622)=.125$ ,  $p=.002$ . This result suggests that students' expectation of successfully enrolling into the second year of study is higher for those students who talk to their parents about their studies more often. Frequency counts (see Table 5.1) show that a higher percentage of students who expect to enrol into their second year on time talk to their parents 'often' (74.4%) about their studies, in comparison to those who do not expect to (50.7%). The output of the Mann Whitney test indicated no statistically significant difference ( $U= 44692.0$ ,  $z =-.192$ ,  $p=.848$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to how often they talked to their parents about studies.

Table 5.1 Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study according to frequency of talking to parents about one's studies.

			Talking to parents about studies.				Total
			never	rarely	sometimes	often	
Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.	No	Count	1	5	28	35	69
		% within Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.	1.4%	7.2%	40.6%	50.7%	100.0%
	I don't know	Count	3	7	49	138	197
		% within Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.	1.5%	3.6%	24.9%	70.1%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	6	11	74	265	356
		% within Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.	1.7%	3.1%	20.8%	74.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	23	151	438	622
		% within Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.	1.6%	3.7%	24.3%	70.4%	100.0%

In the examples of parental support provided earlier, the recognition of institutionalised cultural capital by faculty practices is implicit (i.e. it refers to institutional practices which are common to all students – everyone takes the anatomy exam, but some are more privileged than others in that they can, for instance, receive educational support from their parents). However, cultural capital in its institutionalized 'inherited' form does not only have such implicit repercussions but can also exist explicitly as recognised by the institution. In other words, although notionally the same criteria should apply to all students, in practice there seem to be certain institutional practices which are applied only to selected people. To illustrate this point, here is an extract from an interview with Ružica (SG, MGO) who, fondly speaking of a colleague, says:

I know a guy whose mum and dad and brother had finished oil and he's studying oil now too. And I think that's great. The geo-technology teacher said to him 'O, you're here as well, the whole family!' and then *he had no problems passing that exam, because it's like another member of the family*, 'can't look at you all any more'. What mark do you need? 3, 4, 5? She asked him a few questions just for the sake of it. Cool.

This excerpt is a good example of, on the one hand, Bourdieu's (1979) 'inheritor' (i.e. someone who enrolls into the same course as other family members), and, on the other, the ways in which institutions explicitly recognize and reward this 'inheritance'. The impression that Ružica gives is that the teacher has privileged a student solely on the basis of his inherited cultural capital in its institutionalized form, which is in effect converted into social capital – the teacher knows the parents, illustrating the relational nature of capitals. In this process of (mis)recognition, the educational field positions certain students in a dominant position over others. What is particularly surprising here is that Ružica herself, who does not seem to enjoy such privilege, accepts and even commends such an act. According to Bourdieu (1992), such 'doxa' or uncontested acceptance of the daily life world contributes to the persistence of social inequalities.

Stories of teachers' subjectivity in marking based on their recognition of such cultural capital were cited by students at faculties which practised internal assessment by individual teachers at oral exams; this finding resonates with Sullivan's (2007) claim that individual teacher assessment leaves scope for direct bias. Indeed, at faculties where there were no oral exams, such bias was not reported. However, apart from the opportunity to enjoy certain educational privileges because one's parents have completed the enrolled course of study, a further issue which was raised in certain interviews was how this influences individuals, especially since students seem to talk amongst themselves about what their parents do for a living and what their parents' educational background is. The two following extracts illustrate how, although having such cultural capital is largely positive, there can also be drawbacks, i.e. while cultural capital is always capable of generating profits it can also cause resentment and envy in others.

(1) K: Do you think having parents who have completed this course of study is an advantage?

Melita (FG, MGO) : Hm...I think it might be easier for them because some opportunities will open up faster for them...they have more opportunities, but then again, they'll have to prove themselves more. And it might be more difficult for them in relation to some of their colleagues who know about their parents...*they might look at them differently and some people might be jealous or angry or think that it's unfair.*

K: But do people know whose parents have completed this course?

Melita: Yeah, yeah.

K: How?

Melita: Well, students say it themselves and they talk about it as if it's a joke. They say things like 'my old man sent me here'.

(2) K: Your dad is a doctor. Do your colleagues know this?

Rebeka (SG, MED): Yeah.

K: Do they comment on it?

Rebeka: *I think it's a disadvantage in general because everyone sees you as a doctor's kid, like I'm some little snob.* Although, I have never personally come into contact with such people, maybe in a joking way I've heard it. But yeah, I guess I feel it.

K: What about your teachers?

Rebeka: I guess that depends. Most of them don't know, *unless it's a famous doctor from Zagreb, then that's usually an advantage because it's easier to pass exams.*

Having cultural capital is usually perceived as rendering privileges and, although one could argue that this would be correct in most cases, both these extracts show the dual nature of cultural capital possession in its institutionalized form: on the one hand, it might have negative connotations for fellow students, such as being perceived as a snob or looked upon with jealousy, and one might have to 'prove' oneself more, but, on the other hand, it might be an advantage with teachers (possibly easier to pass an exam). This further illustrates the relational nature of capital: what might be considered as a strength in the academic dimension of the educational field, can also be considered a weakness in its social aspect. Bourdieu (1984) recognises this by claiming: 'the same practices may receive opposite meanings and values in different fields, in different configurations or in opposing sectors of the same field' (p.94).

Rebeka's and Ružica's interview excerpts also point to the earlier mentioned multi-layered nature of being an 'inheritor', not all of which the institution necessarily recognizes. That is, there are students whose parents have completed HE, but not the one the student has enrolled into, there are students whose parents have completed the course the student has enrolled into, but who are not recognized by the individual teacher, and then there are students whose parents have completed the course the student has enrolled and who are recognized by individual teachers – the latter group being the one enjoying most benefits, since their institutionalised cultural capital is also reinforced through social capital. Again, the relational nature of cultural capital and field is recognised.

Finally, as Rebeka's use of 'famous' suggests, recognition of membership in the most privileged group can be surname based. Bourdieu discusses the prestige of names in reference to Kabylean society, and sees 'the form of the prestige and renown attached to a family and a name' (1977, p.179) as an instance of symbolic capital. In other words, surnames can accrue symbolic capital through the recognition, status and prestige they provide. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), symbolic capital is 'the form that one or another of these species takes when it is grasped through categories of perception that *recognize* its specific logic or, if you prefer, misrecognize the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation' (p.119). The case of privileging students because of their parents illustrates this misrecognition.

#### *On completed secondary schooling*

So far, this chapter has discussed cultural capital in its inherited form. In this context, parents' direct and indirect influences on their children's continuation to HE and choice of course were addressed, as well as the academic support they can provide and the ways in which institutions implicitly and explicitly recognize their educational backgrounds. However, Bourdieu's critics, such as Goldthorpe, have claimed that Bourdieu overlooks the role educational institutions can have in transmitting cultural capital. Indeed, according to Goldthorpe (2007), in referring to the process of transmission of cultural knowledge, skills and competences: 'Contrary to Bourdieu's claims, educational institutions also can, and do, play a major role in this regard, and one that has some significant degree of independence from the influences of family and class' (p.16). The extent to which schools do or do not transmit such forms of cultural capital is beyond the scope of this study; however, certain forms of cultural capital associated with students' previous schooling, rather than their parents' schooling, were referred to in the interviews. These included hierarchical images of secondary schools, as well as how well previous schooling has prepared students with regard to course content and general working habits.

With regard to hierarchical imagery of secondary schooling, it appears that certain teachers (mis)recognize the type of completed secondary schooling in a manner that results in unfair differential academic treatment. The oral exam is a site which enables them to do this. Here are two selected examples that illustrate such practices:

(1) Mladen (SG, MED): When you have an oral exam, the teacher opens the index<sup>27</sup> and then looks at which school you came from, where you're from, *sometimes they even comment on what a bad school it is*. And of course, they look at how many exams you have passed so far.

K: So, what are your experiences with teachers seeing your index?

Mladen: I feel cut short. Because, some people have passed more exams, *for some it says fifteenth grammar school and everyone knows that's MIOC, so he's the perfect student whereas I'm not as good because I went to the eleventh grammar school. Some teachers are prejudiced*, but it should be the same because we are learning the same content. This secondary school thing is a problem, but then again I chose it myself.

(2) Rebeka (SG, MED): I have a friend in my year group who finished a *secondary nursing school* and for her physics exam, I think it was the course director, she went to her office hours and she told her *'you should be lucky you even passed the entrance exam'*. I don't think that's fair.

In these examples, individually generated institutionalized cultural capital is explicitly rewarded/sanctioned by the educational institution, and students recognise this as unfair. What both Mladen and Rebeka notice is that individual teachers attribute differential status to secondary schools resulting in a hierarchy in which grammar schools are considered to be more prestigious than vocational schools, and within grammar schools as a group, some are attributed with more prestige than others<sup>28</sup>. Such teacher practices are also brought up by two students at MAT. To illustrate, Mili (FG) says: 'there was this one teacher at the very beginning who would look at who was from the fifth or the fifteenth grammar school'; similarly, Marijana (SG) talks about her negative experience with a teacher who saw that she had attended a vocational secondary school and who 'asked me what I was doing at the maths department, how I should transfer while there's still time...he took my index at the beginning of the exam...and looked at which school I came from. He's known for that.'

Marijana's teacher's association of HE as requiring a grammar school background is also reflected in the profile of the student body with regard to completed secondary schooling: 77.6 per cent of the students who filled in the questionnaire indicated that they had attended a grammar school, 20.6 per cent a vocational school and only 1.9 per cent an art school. These results become particularly significant if compared to aggregate CBS (2008) data, which shows that out of the

---

<sup>27</sup> The 'index' is the student's official document where his/her grades get written down. The first page holds information such as parent names, nationality, completed secondary school, date and place of birth. The following pages list subjects taken and grades received. It is common practice for students to take their index to teachers to have their grades hand written into the appropriate slot.

<sup>28</sup> Reay et al. (2005) refer to such status distinctions as aspects of institutional habitus. A more detailed appreciation of the inclusive and exclusive aspects of institutional habitus is given in Chapter 10.

total secondary school population, grammar school pupils accounted for 26.9 per cent of the pupil body in 2005/2006. In other words, grammar school pupils constitute a minority in the secondary school population as a whole, but are the privileged majority in HE. Interestingly, results of the Kruskal Wallis test ( $\chi^2$  (6,  $N$  = 637) = 71.588,  $p < .001$ ) indicate a statistically significant difference between faculties with regard to the type of secondary schooling attended by their students. Frequencies (see Table 5.2) show that although the majority of students at all six faculties have completed grammar schooling, differences can be observed with regard to how well represented students from art and vocational schools are at each faculty; of the twelve art school students who participated in the research, ten of them study at DES. In addition, the highest proportion of grammar school pupils is at MED (95.7%), where there are only eight vocational school pupils, while the lowest proportion of grammar school pupils is at MGO (55.6%). These results suggest that completed grammar schooling is not only the expected educational pathway for HE in general, but also more specifically for certain faculties over others.

Table 5.2 Distribution of students according to faculty and type of completed secondary school.

			Type of secondary school			
			Vocational	Grammar school	Art school	
Faculty	DES	Count	4	19	10	33
		% within faculty	12.1%	57.6%	30.3%	100.0%
	MED	Count	8	178	0	186
		% within faculty	4.3%	95.7%	.0%	100.0%
	MAT	Count	23	62	0	85
		% within faculty	27.1%	72.9%	.0%	100.0%
	MGO	Count	35	45	1	81
		% within faculty	43.2%	55.6%	1.2%	100.0%
	FTB	Count	17	66	0	83
		% within faculty	20.5%	79.5%	.0%	100.0%
	EEC	Count	44	124	1	169
		% within faculty	26%	73.4%	.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	131	494	12	637
		% within faculty	20.6%	77.6%	1.9%	100.0%

The information in the index with regard to attended secondary school also further disadvantages first generation students since, according to questionnaire data, they are more likely to have completed vocational schooling. That is, the Mann Whitney test indicated a statistically significant difference ( $U = 37221.5$ ,  $z = -5.252$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between first and second generation students in type of attended secondary schooling. Frequency counts show that whereas 84.4 per cent of second generation students had a grammar school background, 64.9 per cent of first generation students had attended grammar schooling. In addition, whereas 13.8 per cent of second generation students had attended a vocational school, the same type of schooling was attended by 32.9 per

cent of first generation students. This resonates with Bourdieu's (1967) observation that the process of separating pupils into school careers that will last for many years from those who are 'shot straight into adult life' follows class divisions (p.199).

The index the students talk about increases the chance of unfair treatment through two further channels: social and academic. An extract from Ružica's (SG, MGO) interview illustrates this:

I mean, they have a look. Everyone browses through your index, but what are their reasons and what are they precisely looking at and looking for in your index, I don't know. They look at things like, I mean a lot of teachers say, *oh you didn't pass many exams in the first semester. Now, is that their right or not?* Some teachers have to have a look because you can't take Maths 2 if you haven't passed Maths 1. But they all have a look. *As far as nationality and that stuff, no one has commented on mine so far, but it says I'm Croatian. Maybe if it said something different, maybe they would comment.*

Both Mladen and Ružica mention in their interviews how teachers have a look at how many exams were previously passed and what grades were given. The academic criteria is that it is a prerequisite to pass another subject in order to take a following one; however, it seems that teachers look at past grades irrespective of this. With regard to social criteria, Ružica hinted in her interview at the implications certain other information, such as nationality, might have on marking. Such biased marking was not mentioned at the EEC where students do not take oral exams and where they have a plastic card (so-called e-index), which does not carry the information that the 'traditional' type of index does. This practice shows how institutions can contribute to minimizing the educational repercussions of social differences between students.

Individually generated institutionalized cultural capital has further possible repercussions for the educational success of students, since it seems that attending different secondary schools renders some students better academically prepared than others. In this context, mathematics seems to be a particular problem for vocational school pupils. For example, in comparison to Jelena (FG, EEC) who attended a mathematics grammar school and says that her maths in the first term was a repetition of her secondary school maths, Petar (FG, EEC), a vocational school pupil, recognizes that 'people from grammar schools are at an advantage in comparison to me because of maths'. Similarly, according to Fran (FG, FTB), 'Secondary school prepared me around 70 per cent. It didn't prepare me for maths, but that's an issue with all vocational schools, too little maths', and this point was reiterated in the other interviews with students who had attended vocational schools yet had to pass a maths exam. For Fran to be able to overcome this problem,

he takes private lessons paid by his parents and says 'I just work more than the others'. However, since Fran attended a food technology secondary school, he feels better prepared for some of the more technical subjects at his faculty. Ružica (SG, MGO), who attended a language grammar school, also recognizes the advantages some students with vocational or maths secondary schooling have:

*It's easier if you had geometry in secondary school. A lot of people came to this faculty and they already knew geometry and you can't compare those who have already had that in secondary school with me who hears about it for the first time. Half of my group was like that. We're drawing the first programme, they've already finished it and started the second one, and I haven't even done half of the first one. And then you get a low opinion of yourself for no reason. You look around yourself and think 'God, where are these people compared to me', when actually it's not your fault. You went to the secondary school you went to. There are a lot of people from maths grammar schools, or chemical or geological vocational schools who study geology. Of course they'll find it easier than someone who has completed a language grammar school and sees these technical subjects for the first time.*

Fran's and Ružica's interview extracts illustrate the multi-layered nature of secondary schooling attended, where students who attended certain grammar schools are generally better prepared in subjects such as maths, which is an obligatory subject at most of the institutions examined, whereas vocational school students are better versed in the technical subjects, where these are taken. However, students gave the impression that grammar school pupils find it easier to cope with the technical subjects than vocational school pupils do with mathematics. When I asked students how teachers overcame these differences, there were mixed responses. Some students mentioned teachers who taught as if no one had any previous knowledge, whereas others talked about teachers who expected prior knowledge. To illustrate this, Ružica (SG, MGO) says: 'Most teachers start from the beginning. For example, physics. We all had physics in secondary school, but the teacher started from the beginning'; Marko (FG, EEC) also comments that his teachers do not assume prior knowledge. On the other hand, Lana (FG, FTB) observed: 'They don't care that we don't know, whether we have done it before or not. He just says everything quickly, doesn't care a bit. Who understands, understands, who doesn't, doesn't. It's awful'; similarly, Katarina (FG, DES) remarks: 'we only had maths for the first two years in art school...it's a problem because you come to the lesson and he's convinced that we've already done all of this, that we have it at our fingertips, and you have no idea what he's talking about'. According to Katarina, 'we're being discriminated against...and you can complain, but you didn't finish a grammar school. It's your own fault'. Martin (FG, DES) reiterates Katarina's point about not

having enough maths knowledge from secondary schooling. In the context of HE experiences, we can see the bearing previous secondary schooling has on student experiences. The same stands true for students who worry about whether they will be penalized at an oral exam on the basis of particular information in their index.

Apart from the impact of previous schooling on dealing with course content, students also mentioned having or lacking the required study skills. Bartol (SG, DES) says that his private secondary school had 'killed all my working habits. It's a private school, it'll all be easy' and this is reiterated by his colleague who has also completed private secondary schooling: 'I didn't get working habits in my secondary school because it was always...you can always...postpone everything'. This is different from the accounts given by students at certain state grammar schools. For example, Tanja (SG, EEC), who completed a maths grammar school, says: 'to tell you the truth it's less strenuous for me at the faculty than it was in secondary school. I went to the y grammar school which is really demanding...we used to have five exams in a week...they don't spare you. If you wanted to be good there you had to make an effort, so this really isn't that bad for me'. Finally, Filip (SG, MAT) says: 'I first had to get used to studying, because I went through secondary school just to pass, to finish it'. These interview extracts suggest that students who have completed more demanding secondary schools are better prepared to face up to the university challenge. It seems as if the pedagogic work at such schools has endowed the students with 'durable, transposable training (habitus)' (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, p.196), i.e. an educational habitus that fits the habitus of the higher education institution.

In relation to this, although the issue of what influences expectation of successful enrolment into the second year is complex and cannot be reduced to a single variable, it was nevertheless interesting to explore the relationship between type of attended secondary schooling and students' expectation of successful enrolment into the second year. Results from the questionnaire data suggest a statistically significant difference between students who had completed different types of secondary schooling with regard to their expectation of successfully enrolling into the second year (Kruskal Wallis test:  $\chi^2(2, N = 627) = 20.440, p < .001$ ). Frequencies show that whereas 23.7 per cent of vocational school pupils did not expect to enrol into the second year on time, only 7.4 per cent of grammar school pupils reported the same (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Distribution of students' expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study based on the type of secondary school they completed.

			Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.			
			No	I don't know	Yes	Total
Type of secondary school	Vocational school	Count	31	43	57	131
		% within Type of secondary school completed.	23.7%	32.8%	43.5%	100.0%
	Grammar school	Count	36	153	295	484
		% within Type of secondary school completed.	7.4%	31.6%	61.0%	100.0%
	Art school	Count	1	3	8	12
		% within Type of secondary school completed.	8.3%	25.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	68	199	360	627
		% within Type of secondary school completed.	10.8%	31.7%	57.4%	100.0%

The impact of previous schooling on one's HE experiences has been discussed in this section with regard to prestige attributed to particular forms of secondary schooling over others, as well as the practical impact different types of secondary schooling can have with regard to course preparedness, both in terms of content and working habits. It was generally suggested that students with a grammar school background are in a more privileged position in comparison to those who have completed vocational schooling, and that students with completed vocational schooling are more likely to be first generation students. In other words, we can observe how early educational streaming can lead to later educational (dis)advantage. This was also found to be relevant by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), who state: 'It is principally through the medium of initial streaming (type of secondary school and first year sixième-section) that social origin predetermines educational destiny' (p.80).

In *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992), Bourdieu initially refers to linguistic relations as 'always' relations of symbolic power (p.142), later rephrasing this by giving it a less deterministic tone and saying that every linguistic act contains the 'potentiality of an act of power', especially when involving agents occupying asymmetric positions (p.145). A higher education setting is one in which we find agents occupying such 'asymmetric' positions, and Baudelot's (1994) article on student rhetoric in examined essay writing illustrates how this plays out by showing how inequalities in linguistic performance affect academic marking. According to Baudelot: 'It is significant that marks tend to fall as more and more of the traits are found which, according to Bernstein, distinguish working-class from upper-class speech patterns. As these features recede, on the other hand, marks rise, responding to the qualities of complex and differentiated language peculiar to the cultivated classes' (1994, p.84). In other words, examiners recognize and reward classed linguistic capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) make the same point by claiming that 'style is always taken into account, implicitly or explicitly, at every level of the educational system' (p.73) and also 'the unequal social class distribution of educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the best hidden mediations through which the relationship (grasped by our tests) between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up' (p.116). However, two important assumptions are being made here: that there are differences in linguistic competence between different classes (which may stand correct for the researched British and French context, but may not necessarily reflect the Croatian context) and that institutional practices reward inherited linguistic competence. The scope of this study does not enable an evidenced comment on classed linguistic distinctions in Croatia; however, certain students did comment on linguistic distinctions and their potential impact on studying, so the following section discusses selected interview extracts which illustrate this.

The first such extract comes from an interview with Melita, a first generation student at MGO. In the extract, Melita talks about the importance of eloquence in everyday life and she associates the institutional development of eloquence with grammar schooling.

K: You went to a classical grammar school. Does this educational background help in any way?

Melita (FG, MGO): Well, in everyday life in certain situations it does....I learned 8 languages all together and I have forgotten a lot of it and things get mixed up, but even today when I take a grammar book or a dictionary *I know how to express myself*, when I see an unknown word I connect

it to Greek...*my vocabulary is richer*...I have noticed for example that *people who have attended grammar schools are more eloquent*, that they even *find it easier to communicate with people*.

K: Do you think this is important for studying?

Melita: *Depends on the faculty. For example, for law, I think it's crucial. With these humanities and social sciences, at these you have to...*if you have 1000 pages, it's not a formula like in physics which you have to write out and you don't really communicate...there is no need to communicate unless it's on theory...but when you have some enormous content, you need to express your opinion and views and link it together into a story, then you have to know how to express yourself....that's crucial if you ask me...*we were taught in school to express ourselves, like don't just say a word, say a whole sentence...don't just answer with yes or no, but answer the question fully.*

Melita has the impression that people who have completed grammar schooling are more eloquent; as a grammar school pupil she was 'taught in school' how to express herself. In addition, her excerpt illustrates the relational aspect of capitals by acknowledging that 'eloquence' becomes capital depending 'on the faculty'. The possible role of schools in transmitting cultural capital is also mentioned by Andrej (SG), who himself attended a classical grammar school and studies at the same faculty as Melita.

Andrej: I think it's important in everyday life when you know how to express yourself. This can only help you, it can't be bad for you. For example, I know how when I talk to colleagues who have finished, let's say a vocational school for catering, I mean, I don't have a problem with that, I don't look at people through such things, but the moment I start saying something he...*'o come on'...*can't be bothered to listen because when you go and have a discussion about something you argue your case better...I mean, *you did logic and your vocabulary is greater. I think our general culture is much bigger*, in this classical sense, I don't mean natural sciences culture, but general culture. *That's because our teachers aimed at this general culture.*

K: Does your general culture help you in any way in your studies?

Andrej: No, I think it helps me with other people, because I know about something someone else is talking about, I know what he means. *When a professor says something in class I know what he means*, he doesn't have to explain anything in any special way. I also had subjects such as psychology, philosophy in secondary school and now I have a subject called Science, technology and society which is more or less based on these. *So, I guess it does have its advantages, but it's not like I profit from it a lot.*

In other words, both Melita and Andrej recognize grammar schools as institutional sites for the acquisition of linguistic capital. Andrej specifically juxtaposes grammar schools to vocational schools when he says 'a vocational school for catering, I mean, I don't have a problem with that,

I don't look at people through such things'. Andrej verbalizes here the underlying sense of grammar school pupils as academically superior to vocational school pupils (even though the entrance procedures to university are the same for all pupils), initially distancing himself from according any judgments on the basis of this differential status but then moving on to talk about vocational school pupils as lacking a competence he has, namely general culture, and which he associates with his own secondary schooling. Such identified differences between grammar and vocational schools resonate with Bourdieu's (1984) observation that the educational system is unequally responsible for the acquisition of cultural capital.

Although both Melita and Andrej recognize the impact of their secondary schooling on their linguistic capabilities, the school's influence may have different weight for the two students since they come from different family backgrounds. Arguably, it might be more difficult for Melita, as a first generation student, to acquire linguistic capital at home than it is for Andrej, whose parents have both completed HE. To illustrate more specifically the role of the family in developing embodied cultural capital, here are two extracts from interviews with Danijela (SG, MED) and Sonja (SG, MAT). Danijela says: 'I know a lot about history of art and literature because my parents were both at the Faculty of Philosophy, but if they weren't I don't think I'd have the time to expand myself in that way'. Sonja, who goes to music school, says: 'my mum has been listening to jazz and classical music and classical rock since I was little...I think it all comes from the family. I don't think someone whose parents listen to folk music would decide at the age of fifteen to enrol into music school, or listen to classical music and go to classical concerts'. The two extracts suggest that, for second generation students, families can be a source of cultural knowledge and taste, and Sonja's excerpt illustrates well Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus as embodied taste which, in her case, gives rise to particular music tastes as they have been shaped by her family. According to de Graaf, de Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000):

We can safely assume that parental involvement in highbrow cultural activities and parents' knowledge of the beaux arts enhances children's familiarity with specific cultural dispositions and tastes (p.96).

This contention was further explored with the questionnaire data through questions on topics of conversation with parents, free-time activities and film, reading and music tastes. The following section addresses these practices inspired by Bourdieu's (1984) claim that:

Surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (p.1).

### *Cultural practices*

With regard to how frequently students talk to their parents about particular topics (four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'never' to 'often'), results show that the majority of students (70.5%) 'often' talked to their parents about their studies (see Figure 5.2).

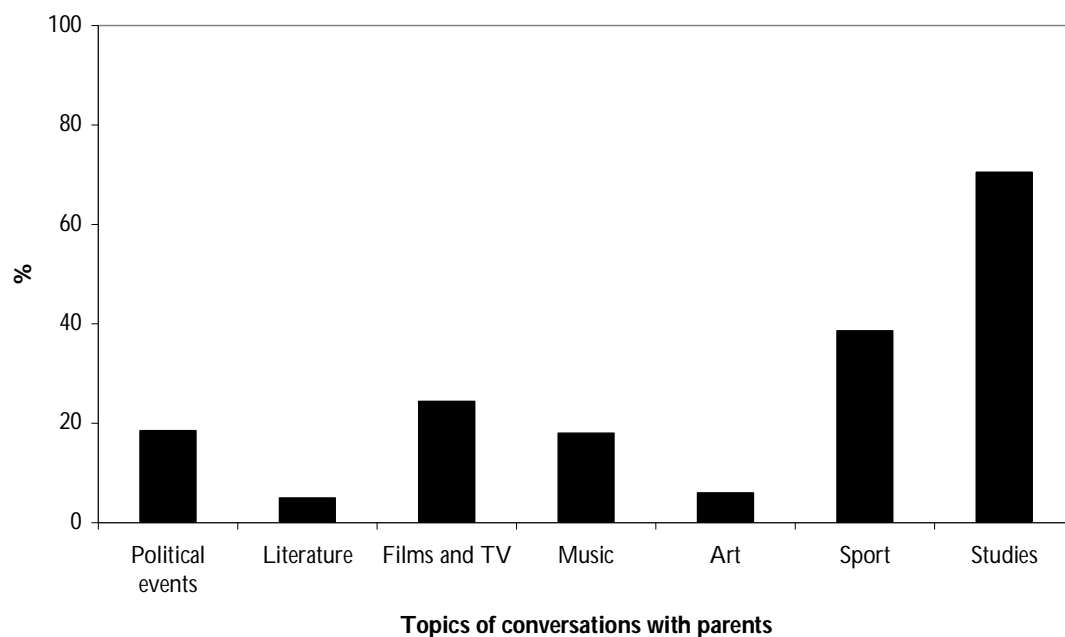


Figure 5.2 Reported frequency of talking to parents about particular topics.

\*The percentages reported refer to students who answered 'often' to this question.

In order to examine the relationship between parents' educational background and how often students talked to their parents about particular topics, the Mann Whitney test was applied which indicated that differences between first and second generation students were statistically significant with regard to talking to parents about 'daily political events' ( $U = 39351.0$ ,  $z = -2.823$ ,  $p = .005$ ), 'literature' ( $U = 33696.0$ ,  $z = -5.180$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and 'art' ( $U = 35537.5$ ,  $z = -3.871$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Frequency counts show that higher educational levels of parents are associated with more frequent conversing about the listed topics. For example, whereas 19.3 per cent of second generation students indicated they 'sometimes' talked to their parents about art and 7.3 per cent indicated 'often', 12.9 per cent of first generation students indicated 'sometimes' and 3.2 per cent 'often'. The earlier mentioned example of Danijela, a second generation student who mentions

talking to her parents about art and literature, is captured here in quantitative form. These results confirm Bourdieu's (1984) identified association between higher educational levels and what he refers to as 'legitimate taste'.

With regard to free time activities, students were asked how often they went to the cinema, theatre, to pop concerts, classical music concerts, folk music concerts, sports events and exhibitions. Frequency counts show that overall a low percentage of students did any of the offered activities 'often' (see Figure 5.3).

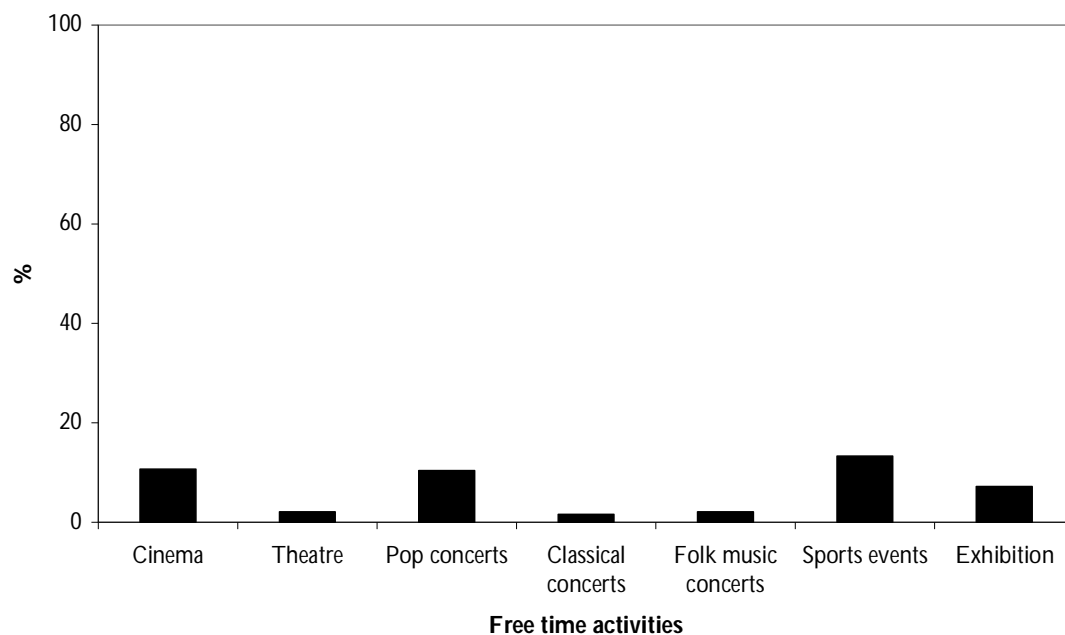


Figure 5.3 Percentage of students who indicated taking part in the listed free time activities 'often'.

Here the differences between first and second generation students were found to be statistically significant with regard to going to the cinema, theatre, classical concerts, folk music concerts and exhibitions (see Table 5.4.).

Table 5.4 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their free time activities.

	Cinema	Theatre	Pop concerts	Classical concerts	Folk music concerts	Sports events	Exhibition
Mann-Whitney U	37246.0	37542.5	41168.0	38392.5	39993.5	44247.0	37864.0
Z	-3.776	-3.526	-1.723	-2.929	-2.587	-.373	-3.430
p	<.001	<.001	.085	.003	.010	.709	.001

Frequencies suggest that higher educational levels of parents are associated with students' more frequent visits to the cinema, theatre, classical concerts and exhibitions. Indeed, all of the students who reported going to classical concerts 'often' were second generation students. The finding on visits to the cinema corresponds to Bourdieu's (1984) results which showed that cinema-going was lower among the less educated. On the other hand, lower parental educational levels are associated with more frequently going to folk music concerts (8.6% of first generation students indicated 'sometimes' going to folk music concerts in comparison to 4.8% of second generation students who indicated the same). It seems that going to pop concerts and sports events is a pastime equally frequented by first and second generation students.

Differences between first and second generation students were further explored in relation to their tastes in films (Figure 5.4), reading interests (Figure 5.5) and music tastes (Figure 5.6)<sup>29</sup>.

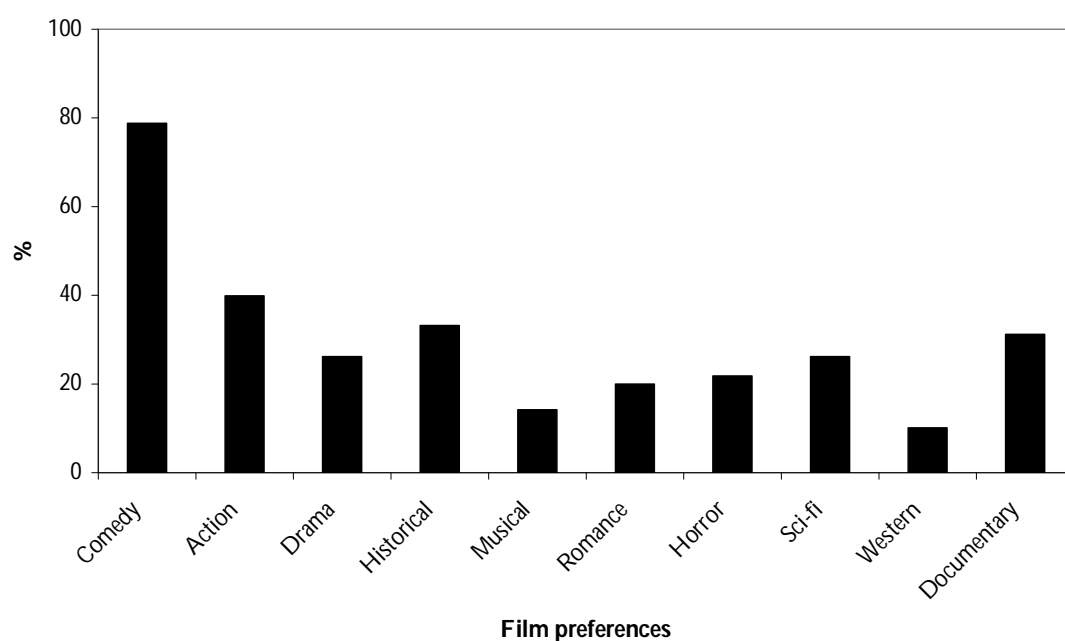


Figure 5.4 Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed films (choice of three).

The Mann Whitney test indicated statistically significant differences between first and second generation students with regard to their tastes in dramas (see Table 5.5). Frequencies show that a higher percentage of second generation students reported liking dramas (second generation: 29.2%, first generation 20.5%).

<sup>29</sup> In the questionnaire students were asked to mark three preferences. According to Coulangeon and Lemel (2007), in previous surveys on French cultural practices which had no limitations fewer than 10 per cent of respondents quoted more than three genres.

Table 5.5 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their film tastes.

	Comedy	Action	Drama	Historical	Music	Romance	Horror	Sci-fi	Western	Documentary
Mann-Whitney U	44367.5	43938.0	42025.5	45907.5	44221.5	43808.0	45487.0	43587.0	44636.5	45006.0
Z	-1.303	-1.195	-2.467	-.159	-1.476	-1.557	-.447	-1.534	-1.350	-.669
p	.193	.232	.014	.874	.140	.119	.655	.125	.177	.504

In the conducted research, most students indicated they liked reading classics (see Figure 5.5).

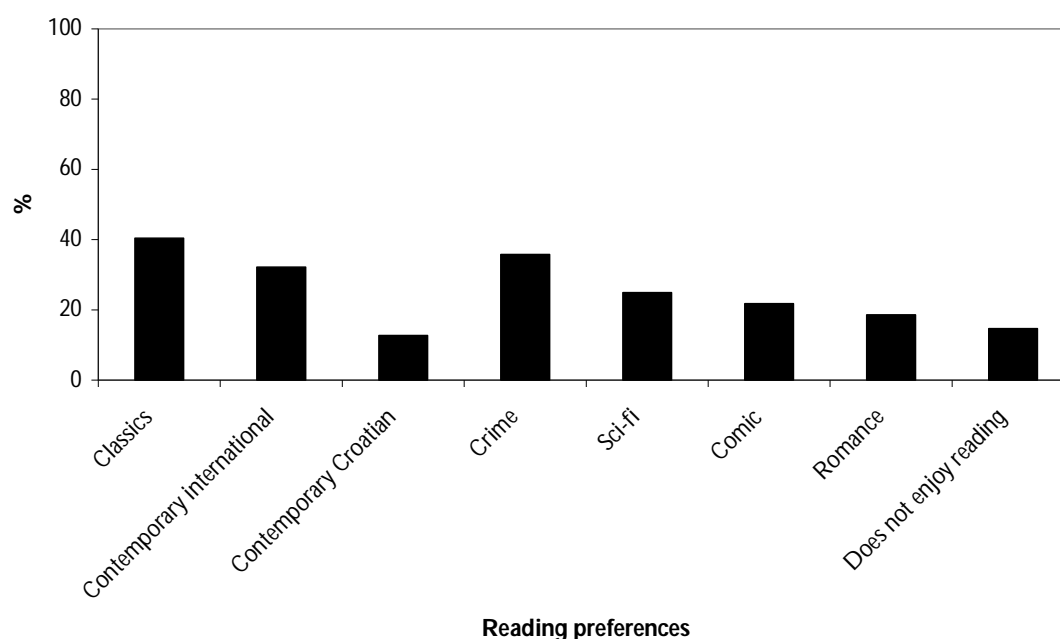


Figure 5.5 Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed types of books (choice of three).

According to van Rees et al. (1999), reading preferences are strongly associated with education. However, the Mann Whitney test indicated that there were no significant differences between first and second generation students with regard to reading preferences (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their reading tastes.

	Classical literature	Contemporary international prose and poetry	Contemporary Croatian prose and poetry	Crime novels	Sci-fi novels	Comic books	Romance novels	Does not enjoy reading
Mann-Whitney U	44719.5	44473.5	45049.0	44669.5	45888.5	45717.0	43990.0	45726.5
Z	-.667	-.838	-.720	-.709	-.048	-.159	-1.326	-.178
p	.505	.402	.471	.479	.962	.873	.185	.859

According to Coulangeon and Lemel (2007), musical tastes are particularly revealing of people's social class. The authors claim that 'music is not part of shared school-learned culture to the same extent as literature' (p.94), which is a possible explanation for why differences were not found between first and second generation students with regard to their reading tastes. In this study, the majority of students reported that they liked international rock and pop music and Croatian rock and hip pop (see Figure 5.6).

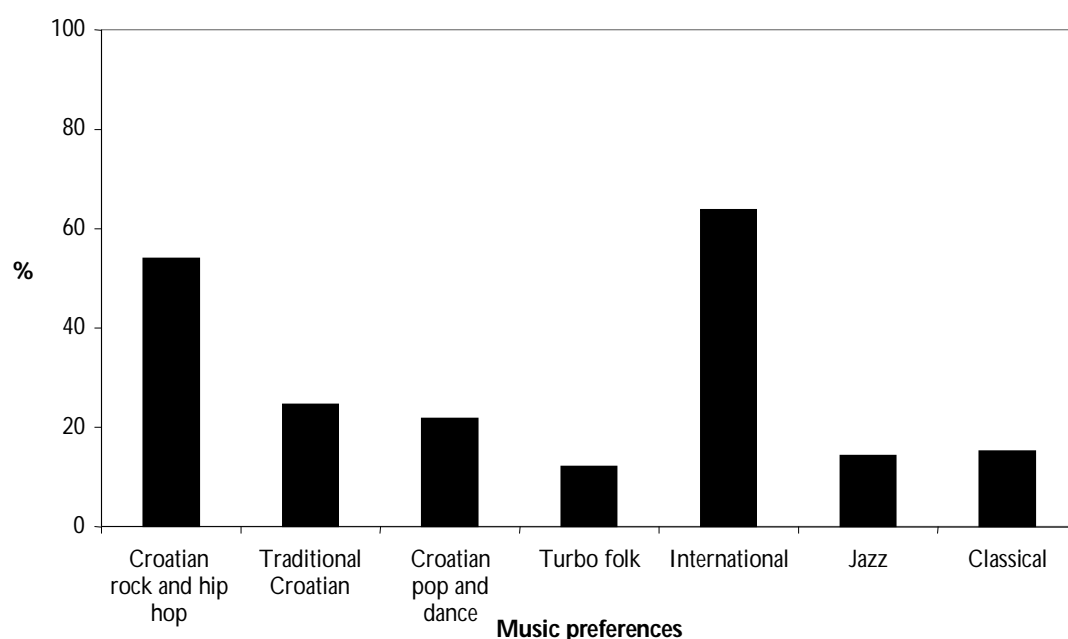


Figure 5.6 Percentage of students who indicated a preference for the listed types of music (choice of three).

Here the Mann Whitney test suggests that differences between first and second generation students are statistically significant with regard to their tastes in turbo folk and jazz music (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their music tastes.

	Croatian rock and hip hop	Croatian traditional	Croatian pop and dance	Turbo folk	International rock and pop music	Jazz	Classical music
Mann-Whitney U	45589.0	43133.5	43100.0	42067.0	45483.0	42907.0	44438.0
Z	-.199	-1.723	-1.815	-3.126	-.265	-2.285	-1.112
p	.842	.085	.070	.002	.791	.022	.266

Frequencies suggest that lower educational levels of parents are associated with a higher preference for turbo folk music (17.6% of first generation students indicated listening to turbo

folk music, whereas 9.1% of second generation students did the same), whereas higher educational levels of parents are associated with a higher preference for jazz (16.8% of second generation students in comparison to 10.1% of first generation students). In terms of Coulangeon and Lemel's classification, the former music tastes belong to 'popular' genres, whereas the latter to 'elite' music.

The presented results indicate that parents' higher levels of education are associated with a tendency for students to talk more often to parents about daily political events, literature and art, as well as more frequent visits to the cinema, theatre, classical concerts and exhibitions; they are also associated with a higher preference for dramas and jazz music in comparison to first generation students. In other words, higher educational levels are associated with what de Graaf, de Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000) refer to as the 'classical operationalization' of cultural capital: attendance at theatres, museums, classical music concerts, art exhibitions and galleries. Similarly, Kingston (2001) refers to 'participation in or appreciation of "elite" cultural acts, such as going to art museums or liking classical music' (p.90) as the most common indicators of high-status cultural signals. In addition, according to Bourdieu (1985), the possessors of a substantial cultural capital are more likely to be museum-goers than those who lack such capital. On the other hand, lower levels of parents' education are associated with more frequent visits to folk music concerts and a preference for turbo folk music.

Coulangeon and Lemel (2007) discuss their findings on musical tastes in contemporary France in terms of three lines of argument: the 'homology effect', which they associate with Bourdieu, according to which social stratification and cultural consumption tend to map closely onto each other; the 'individualization' approach, which sees consumption as losing its grounding in social stratification and reflecting individuals' quest for self-identity; and the 'omnivore-univore' perspective which constructs cultural consumption as stratified, but not on an elite-mass basis. This approach claims that the consumption of individuals in the higher strata is greater in amount and wider in range, not only in terms of high-brow culture, but also middle-brow and low-brow too.

The identified association between particular cultural tastes and educational levels suggest support for the homology rather than individualization approach. However, it is also important to note that common practices can be identified across educational levels. No statistically significant differences were found with regard to how often first and second generation students

talk to their parents about studies and sports, attend sport events and pop concerts or listen to Croatian rock and hip hop music, traditional Croatian music, international rock and pop and even classical music. In addition, no statistically significant differences were found in relation to reading tastes, as well as most film tastes. In other words, the results of the questionnaire suggest that although high cultural preferences are positively associated with parents' higher levels of education, there are also overlaps in preferences. This 'commonalities' point is made by Gartman (1991), who critiques Bourdieu for suggesting that class lifestyles are sharply segmented and insular and advocates a more nuanced approach to cultural preferences by class which takes into consideration 'a common, mass culture' (p.430). An explanation may be that such a 'mass culture' is growing as technology spreads.

As a final point in relation to such social distinctions, while a focus in the discussed questions was on non-material culture, such as art and music, one of the questions in the questionnaire also touched upon cultural capital in its objectified form. The students were asked to report (yes or no) whether the home they lived in for most of their life had 'a lot of classical books', 'a lot of artwork', 'a lot of popular music tapes/cds/records' and 'a lot of classical music tapes/cds/records'. The results show that the majority of students have a lot of popular music recordings (74.5%) and a lot of literature books (52.8%). Fewer students reported having classical music (31.1%) and 29.6 per cent a lot of paintings. The differences between first and second generation students were found to be significant for all of these items (see Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students with regard to their family's ownership of cultural goods.

	Literature books	Paintings	Popular music cds	Classical music cds
Mann-Whitney U	25260.5	25231.5	35760.0	28048.5
Z	-7.007	-6.140	-2.981	-4.131
p	<.001	<.001	.003	<.001

Frequency counts suggest that higher educational levels of parents are associated with having literature books, paintings, and popular and classical music: whereas 63.5 per cent of second generation students reported having a lot of literature books in their family homes, only 32.7 per cent of their first generation counterparts indicated the same. Similarly, whereas 38.2 per cent of second generation students reported they had a lot of paintings in their home, 13.1 per cent of first generation students reported the same. With regard to popular music possession, 78.3 per cent of second generation students in comparison to 67.1 per cent of first generation students indicated having a lot of popular music tapes/cds/records; as far as classical music possession, a higher percentage of second generation students (37.2%) reported having a lot of classical music

tapes/cds/records in comparison to first generation students (20.1%). Here again we find that higher educational levels are associated with high status cultural goods.

Since these cultural goods also have economic value, it was interesting to examine whether there was a difference between first and second generation students with regard to how they estimate their family's financial status. The results of the Mann Whitney test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference ( $U = 27042.5$ ,  $z = -8.881$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between these two groups with regard to their estimation of family income. Frequencies suggest that higher educational levels of parents are also associated with higher estimations of financial status: whereas 60.5 per cent of second generation students estimate their family's financial status as 'good' or 'very good', the same is reported by 25.8 per cent of first generation students (see Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Distribution of first and second generation students based on their estimation of financial status.

		Financial status					Total
		Very bad	Bad	Average	Good	Very good	
First generation	Count	4	24	138	57	1	224
	% within Students by parents educational level	1.8%	10.7%	61.6%	25.4%	.4%	100.0%
Second generation	Count	1	10	145	214	25	395
	% within Students by parents educational level	.3%	2.5%	36.7%	54.2%	6.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	5	34	283	271	26	619
	% within Students by parents educational level	.8%	5.5%	45.7%	43.8%	4.2%	100.0%

Although the presented results suggest social distinctions with regard to cultural tastes, as Bourdieu (1984) notes: 'The specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market, which are pertinent and active in the game in question' (p.113). Therefore, in this research study, it is important to ask whether cultural signals, such as eloquence and particular cultural tastes and practices, are recognized by students as having an impact on their educational achievements. In other words, can cultural resources be activated for educational profits, as suggested by authors such as DiMaggio (1982), who has shown that familiarity with 'high' arts is positively related to student grades at lower levels of education. In this respect, Melita's and Andrej's earlier extracts suggested that eloquence could matter educationally at certain faculties (Melita: 'Depends on the faculty. For example, for law, I think it's crucial'), but it does not seem to matter at their own faculty (MGO). Having said this, Andrej does make a point that his linguistic capital facilitates understanding of the lecturer. A similar point is made by de Graaf, de Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000) who recognise that children with more cultural capital communicate more easily with teachers.

When I asked Sonja (SG), a student at the maths faculty, whether the fact that she went to a music school is an advantage for her at her faculty, she said: 'No. I don't think that should give me an advantage...that would be unfair. Why wouldn't someone who listens to Ceca [folk singer] be a good mathematician?' Similarly, according to Jelena (FG, EEC), 'I think such stuff [eloquence and knowledge of art and literature] matters one hundred per cent at the Faculty of Philosophy because they have courses there directly related to that. But here, I wouldn't say so. We don't have oral exams, so it couldn't really matter'. These student extracts resonate with DiMaggio's impression that:

English, History, and Social Studies are subjects in which cultural capital can be expected to make a difference; standards are diffuse and evaluation is likely to be relatively subjective. By contrast, Mathematics requires the acquisition of specific skills in the classroom setting, and students are evaluated primarily on the basis of their success in generating correct answers to sets of problems (1982, p.194).

This is a point Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) also made in reference to the HE system: 'at university science courses success seems at first sight to depend less directly on the possession of inherited cultural capital' (p.157). However, although highbrow cultural practices and knowledge were not mentioned by the interviewed students as having an influence on their educational achievements, students did hint that this may matter at humanities and social sciences departments, and that oral exams increase the likelihood of the teachers' recognition of such cultural distinctions. Differences between faculties in this respect is an interesting topic for further study.

To conclude, this chapter has identified cultural capital as a useful analytical tool with which to capture certain resources contributing to students' choices and experiences of HE. More specifically, it has focused on the influence parents' educational background can have on students' continuation to HE and course choice (e.g. the 'naturalness' to continue to HE for second generation students), as well as the contribution certain parents can make with the educational support they can give to their children. Students' previous schooling was also identified as a form of cultural capital, both in relation to the prestige accorded to grammar schools and course preparedness. Grammar schooling was identified as the more favourable route to HE, yet it was noted that the majority of students who had completed vocational schooling were first generation students. Moreover, certain embodied aspects of cultural capital

were identified as differently distributed amongst first and second generation students, and 'beaux art' participation and cultural goods were positively associated with second generation students. However, institutional practices which reward an appreciation of high brow culture were not registered. It is suggested that this could be a function of the type of selected case study faculties. In relation to the identified relationship between educational level and cultural tastes, it might be useful to pursue these findings further in Croatian class analysis studies. Finally, institutional instances were highlighted where certain instances of cultural capital are both implicitly and explicitly recognized (e.g. teaching under the assumption that students have covered aspects of the course in secondary schooling or teacher assessment), relating cultural capital to the field rather than just treating it as the individual's feel for the game, informal knowledge about the institution or personal style.

According to Bourdieu (1977), 'once a system of mechanisms has been constituted capable of objectively ensuring the reproduction of the established order by its own motion, the dominant class have only *to let the system they dominate take its own course* in order to exercise their domination' (p.190). Judging by the impression of students interviewed for this study, this is what the system seems to be doing – students with a secondary grammar school background, with parents who have completed HE and particularly their enrolled course of study ('my dad studied here too'), seem to enjoy beneficial differential treatment to first generation students who attended vocational schooling.

Finally, this chapter has also examined the theoretical premises of cultural capital. The qualitative data analysis showed that the variants of cultural capital, as identified in the research, are not always necessarily inherited but can also be individually generated; and that these variants can reinforce each other, as well as reinforce other forms of capital. Furthermore, the analysis showed that cultural capital can be institutionally recognized both implicitly and explicitly. In other words, it becomes recognized not only through common formal standards, which position some students educationally ahead of others, but also through informal practices. In addition, cultural capital was identified as having gradations, i.e. cultural capital is not just a matter of possession or non-possession, but there are degrees of cultural capital ownership. Lastly, possession of cultural capital was identified as not always necessarily having positive repercussions but as having its drawbacks too.

## CHAPTER 6

### WHO YOU KNOW COUNTS

Dika and Singh (2002) refer to 'social capital' as a 'fuzzy' concept (p.44); Horvat, Lareau and Weininger (2003) as 'plagued by conceptual murkiness' (p.321). Similarly, Silva and Edwards (2003) claim that the body of knowledge about social capital can be viewed as confused and ambiguous. This ambiguity, judging by Portes' (2000, 1998) remarks, results from the diverse applications of the concept both within disciplines and between them; the applications range from a micro-level perspective focusing on social capital as a property of individuals and families to a macro-level elaboration as pertaining to communities, cities and even nations. This observation is also reflected in Quibria's (2003) assertion that:

For some, social capital is an individual asset that comes from access to networks and social connections, whereas others view it as a shared asset that resides in a homogenous collective entity – such as a community with common interests and shared values (p.25).

In the sociology of education literature, micro-level conceptualizations of social capital draw mainly on either James Coleman or Bourdieu. Coleman (e.g. 1988) focuses on social capital as predominantly pertaining to practices within the family, which is akin to the frequent use of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in its operationalization as parents' expectations and parent-child discussion. According to Dika and Singh (2002), a criticism of Coleman's social capital focus is that it tends to underestimate the inequalities rendered by differing volumes of social capital. In a similar tone, Fowler (2009) refers to Coleman as a proponent of individualist rational choice theory. Indeed, Coleman (1988) himself states that he takes the rational action paradigm as his starting point.

This study has drawn on Bourdieu's (1985) use of social capital as the resources accrued from a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships which provides its members with the backing of collectively-owned capital (p.248). However, Bourdieu's conceptualization has been modified in order to capture the specificities of the beneficial social ties that the research has identified. Such a flexible use of the concept is seen as compatible with Bourdieu's claim that social capital should be treated as a thinking tool, theoretical concepts being 'polymorphic, supple and adaptive, rather than defined calibrated and used rigidly' (1992, p. 93). On the one hand, this

study has retained Bourdieu's focus on social capital as linked to extra-familial relationships, its interrelationship with other forms of capital in creating and reproducing inequalities, and the role 'durable networks' have in furthering the privileges of the already socially privileged. On the other hand, it elaborates on Bourdieu's conceptualization by going beyond the 'volume' aspect of social capital, hinted at in his use of 'aggregate' or 'durable', to acknowledge the educational weight of 'serendipitous' social contacts. Moreover, it highlights instances of educationally beneficial extra-familial contacts which have weaker associationality, not all of which are necessarily underlined by Bourdieu's assumption of reciprocity. This understanding of social capital tries to gauge those sources and resources that encourage social mobility rather than just ensure social reproduction. By doing so it addresses the deterministic slant of Bourdieu's theoretical lens.

According to Dika and Singh (2002), studies which have explored the educational effects of interactions with people outside the immediate family have identified the following sources and resources constituting social capital: talking to adults about jobs and education, peer group academic values and influences, close friends attending the same school, caring teachers and extra-curricular involvement. The student interviews reported here touched upon all of these social capital sources and resources, and the following sections address them and add to them. The potential or actual sources of social capital include adults beyond the immediate family, such as family friends, a tennis partner, career advisor and teachers, as well as course colleagues and friends. The beneficial resources they yield include educational advice, job advice and employment opportunities, financial benefits, study materials, educational knowledge, and practical and emotional support.

### *Adults advising*

Authors such as Reay et al. (2005) and Ball and Vincent (1998) have noted that the ways in which young people access information about HE varies by social class. This social distinction could also be observed in the conducted interviews with Croatian students. There was a higher number of interviewed students whose parents had completed an HE degree who received advice from them on their HE choices and/or were referred by them to relevant others. First generation students, on the other hand, generally did not have such readily available first-hand knowledge of university study and their families did not belong to social networks through which they could access such information. The following two extracts from interviews with Danijela (SG) and

Fabijan (FG), both first year undergraduate students at MED, illustrate the differences between these two groups of students. When talking about who they consulted about their course they said:

I was advised by my dad's friend and by one of his colleagues. The first one works at the X institute and the other at the Medicine faculty. (Danijela)

Yes, I did get advice and it was purely by accident. I was giving tennis lessons to a doctor. (Fabijan)

Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as advantages that accrue from group membership captures well Danijela's social tie: her consulted contact comes from her family's 'durable network', i.e. she belongs to a social group which has educationally profitable contacts (her parents are both well-educated professionals). Danijela's case also illustrates the interrelationship between cultural and social capital and the educational benefits this renders. Her parents have institutionalized cultural capital which influences how she narrows down her choice of courses; however, it is through her parents' possession of relevant social relationships that she makes her final, more informed choice of course (she is advised by her father's friends who are both in the natural sciences, whereas her parents are in the social sciences).

However, the focus on a 'durable network' does not capture Fabijan's beneficial social tie: his contact is individually generated 'purely by accident'. This is an important point since Bourdieu has been criticised for seeing social capital as the exclusive property of elites. Indeed, according to Dika and Singh (2002), Bourdieu ultimately saw social capital as an investment of the dominant class to preserve the group's dominant position. Similarly, according to Field (2003): 'There was no place in his theory for the possibility that other, less privileged individuals and groups might also benefit in their social ties' (p.20). If one takes into account Fabijan's example, these are valid points; Fabijan, a socio-economically less privileged student in comparison to Danijela, does benefit educationally from his social tie and Bourdieu's conceptualization overlooks this.

While one could concur with the above-mentioned authors in that an understanding of social capital in an educational context should also include the educationally beneficial social ties of the less privileged, one could also argue that a qualitative distinction between the different contacts needs to be made. Firstly, whereas Danijela's tie is readily available through her family, Fabijan's is accidental. This resonates with Horvat et al.'s (2003) findings that 'middle-class parents are far

more likely to include professionals in their interpersonal networks than are working-class and poor parents' (p.330). When talking about whether his parents advised him on which course to study, Fabijan says:

Well, my parents, I don't know. They never really said exactly what they would like... My parents have nothing to do with medicine, absolutely nothing. Not even my wider family. I am the first generation, totally the first, but someone's got to start.

Fabijan's case is not that of a student whose cultural capital and social capital work together. Secondly, whereas Danijela's tie contributes to maintaining advantage, Fabijan's educationally beneficial contact – his tennis student – has the role of contributor to overcoming disadvantage. This illustrates what Laughlo (2000) refers to as social capital 'trumping' the disadvantages of social class and weak cultural capital. Such 'trumping' of weak cultural capital through social ties can be identified in the narratives of several other first generation students: Fran (FTB), Martin (DES), Marko (EEC) and Damir (MAT) were advised by their secondary school teachers on which course to enrol into, Lovro (FTB) was steered towards his enrolled course by a psychologist who was involved in the recruitment process of the military training programme Lovro was attending and Jelena (EEC) was advised by a professional advisor. However, such 'trumping' cannot be identified in Katarina's (FG, DES) case:

[referring to second generation students]: at least there's some experience; at least people know what exams mean, what colloquia mean. I didn't know anything...I wasn't at all ready; I didn't know what a faculty was.

Katarina's case illustrates the importance of educationally beneficial social contacts beyond the immediate family particularly for first generation students since for second generation students 'at least people know what exams mean'.

In an effort to further explore the role of particular people on students' choice of course, the analysis of student responses to the question 'To what extent did the following people influence your choice of course?' was examined. The available options were: parents, family friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, brother/sister, grandfather/grandmother, friends, secondary school teacher(s) and professional advisor<sup>30</sup>. Students were asked to estimate this influence on a four-

---

<sup>30</sup> Since this section focuses on the influences of social contacts beyond the immediate family, the role of parents is not addressed here, but rather in the section on cultural capital. However, it is worth noting that 26.6 per cent of

point Likert-type scale, from 'not at all' to 'fully'. A basic frequency count showed that the majority of students did not attribute a significant influence to any of the listed people. That is, for each of the available options 26.6 per cent indicated their parents had 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course<sup>31</sup>, 17.6 per cent of students reported the same for a secondary school teacher or teachers, whereas 16.2 per cent for friends (see Figure 6.1).

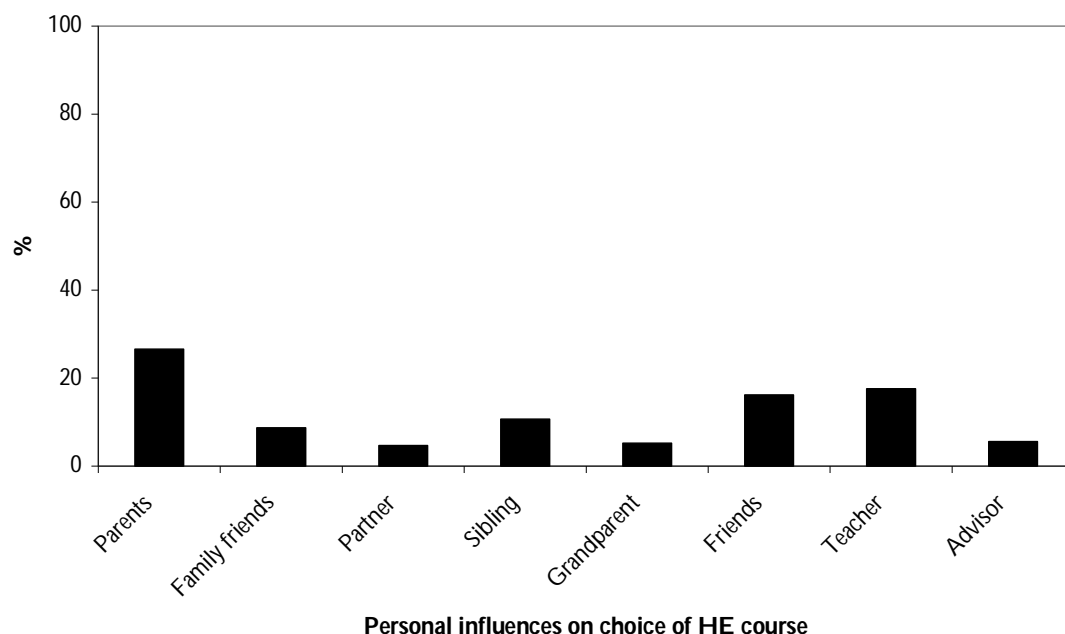


Figure 6.1 Extent of people's influence on students' choice of HE course.

\* Reported figures represent the answers of students who indicated the listed people influenced their choice of course 'mostly' or 'fully'.

Figure 6.1 suggests that none of the provided options was indicated as considerably influential by the majority of students<sup>32</sup>.

The student responses were further analysed to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between first and second generation students with regard to the extent to which their choice of course was influenced by the provided options. The output of the Mann Whitney test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference ( $U = 38125.0$ ,  $z = -3.255$ ,  $p = .001$ ) between first and second generation students only with regard to teacher influence on choice of course (see Table 6.1).

---

students noted that their parents 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course, which puts parents ahead of the other available options as far as extent of influence.

<sup>31</sup> Similarly, James's (2002) research findings suggest that parents are the most important source of advice to students in assisting them to plan their futures. He also mentions that siblings and best friends provide some input, but their advice is not as important as that of parents.

<sup>32</sup> However, it is important to note that the options provided are not an exhaustive list of potential influences. For example, Fabijan's tennis partner is not subsumed under any of the options provided.

Table 6.1 Statistical results of the Mann Whitney test for differences between first and second generation students based on the extent to which certain people influenced their choice of course.

	Parents	Family friends	Partner	Sibling	Grandparent	Friends	Teacher	Professional advisor
Mann-Whitney U	45093.0	43354.0	43512.5	42253.0	42672.0	41159.5	38125.0	41542.5
Z	-.355	-.524	-.235	-1.067	-.742	-.999	-3.255	-1.709
p	.722	.600	.814	.286	.458	.318	.001	.087

Frequency counts indicate that lower educational levels of parents are associated with higher estimations of teacher influences: whereas 24.2 per cent of first generation students reported that a teacher or teachers had 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course; only 13.4 per cent of second generation students did so. These results are similar to James's (2002) findings which showed that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds place more emphasis on the educational advice of careers teachers than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. The earlier mentioned cases of Fran (FTB), Martin (DES), Marko (EEC) and Damir (MAT), four first generation students whose higher education choices were influenced by their teachers, further support this conclusion.

The interviews identified not only the influence of teachers on the choice of course for first generation students but also the influence of family friends for second and professional advisors for first generation students. Although the analysis of student responses in the questionnaire did not show a statistically significant difference between first and second generation students in this respect, frequency counts show that a slightly higher percentage of second generation students (9.3%) noted that family friends had 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course in comparison to their first generation counterparts (7.4%), and a slightly higher percentage of first generation students (6.5%) reported that a professional advisor had 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course in comparison to their second generation peers (5.2%). The greater importance given to teachers and professional advisors by first generation students resonates with the conclusion of Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) that success within the educational system for working class high school students strongly depends on supportive relationships with institutional agents, i.e. those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit institutional resources and information, such as information about school programmes, college admission and assistance with career decision making.

Where first generation students have been advised on choice of course, we can see how they were able to overcome the lack of HE experiences in their immediate family through significant others. Here social relationships act as a compensatory mechanism for first generation students rather than as a motor of privilege. What is particularly noteworthy in the mentioned examples is the importance such 'weak ties' can have for the decision making process. Authors such as Portes (1998) and Baron, Field and Schuller (2000) have been critical of Coleman's statement of the role 'strong' ties have, referring to his emphasis on social capital as grounded in the immediate family rather than also in more distant relationships. Although Bourdieu is not guilty of doing the same, since he emphasized the value of social relationships beyond the family, he does focus on the value of 'durable' networks in his discussion of social capital. Indeed, Bourdieu might argue that the identified beneficial social relationships of the less privileged were merely lucky strikes and not something that could be subsumed under social capital, especially since for Bourdieu it is the *aggregate* of resources which constitutes social capital, rather than individual instances. However, such a focus on the volume of social capital understates the importance of possibly short-term yet valuable social relationships for the less privileged on a more micro, day-to-day level, embodied in the interviews with teachers, career advisors and a tennis partner. In this sense, a broader characterization of social capital could capture the influence that relationships beyond the immediate family circle can have for first generation students, i.e. although social capital contributes to the reproduction of the dominant class through their group networks, it can also contribute to social mobility for the less privileged through weaker associations, albeit less frequently. Indeed, a Bourdieuean focus on how elites reproduce themselves risks overlooking the ways in which educationally beneficial resources can be acquired by first generation students, as well as the need to reinforce institutional provision for such relationships to develop, particularly on behalf of those for whom such valuable encounters are often random yet can have a significant contribution; as illustrated by the example of teachers' influence.

### *Having a 'connection'*

Moving away from HE choice, a further example of the possible interrelationship between different types of capitals and how they can shape educational advantage concerns having a 'connection'. For example, according to Tea (SG, MED): 'I didn't get the state scholarship and I didn't get the municipal scholarship because that always goes through a connection'; in other words, you need to know the 'right' people in order to receive funding. In this case, relevant social ties can contribute to obtaining economic benefits for study purposes. A further influence of a 'connection' was identified by several students with regard to course entry: several students had the impression that one could 'pull' a connection to secure a university place. To illustrate this, Bartol (SG, DES) says: 'I didn't think I was going to enrol so I also went to the Faculty of Graphics because I thought this [DES] place was totally corrupt. I mean, they accept thirty, 300 apply, I thought this must be all through a connection'. Similarly, Ružica's (SG, MGO) choice of course is affected by her perception of the admissions process to the course she considered enrolling:

I thought about x and then I asked about it from people who were studying that, who graduated from there...everything sounded great, but I was disappointed in the end because a lot of people told me *you needed a connection to get in, that you need to pay some money* and have good grades at school. *And I didn't have a connection* nor did I have good grades at school...and then the only person I knew who had the same grades as me in school and I thought she enrolled without a connection, who was the highlight of the whole story...she ended up having a connection. One of her first cousins, she teaches something at the faculty and *she pulled the connection*.

What Bartol's and Ružica's interview excerpts suggest is that choice of course can be influenced by perceptions of corrupt activities and the ability to draw on social contacts for enrolment. These impressions of corruption took central stage in Croatia in September 2008 when police raided several Croatian HE institutions as part of 'Operation Index', which was carried out by the Croatian police and the state attorney's office for fighting corruption and organised crime (USKOK). The New York Times (September 20, 2008) reported the news as follows:

The police raided several universities in Zagreb on Thursday, confiscating computers and documents, and questioning dozens of professors who are suspected of taking bribes to give students passing grades. Mladen Bajic, the chief Croatian prosecutor, said investigators had collected evidence against 21 professors, 3 assistants and 4 university clerks. More than 60 other

people, mostly students and those suspected of acting as middlemen, were still being investigated, he said. The head of the national police force, Marijan Benko, said hundreds of officers were also searching professors' apartments and cars. Mr. Benko said professors were suspected of accepting bribes of \$560 to \$2,800 to give students a passing grade and as much as \$12,600 to enrol them illegally. Most colleges are free in Croatia, but places are limited and potential students are selected through exams.

Drawing on Bourdieu's multiple capital model, what one can observe here is the interrelationship between capitals which render educational privileges, i.e. those who have the financial means and access to relevant others can secure university enrolment and pass grades.

Apart from the academic benefits of having a connection, such ties were also mentioned in relation to securing a place in student accommodation and getting a job. For example, according to Marijana (SG, MAT), 'you get student dorms through a connection... I know a lot of people who don't need to be in student dorms, but their parents are on a high position, so they get dorms. It's really not fair how dorms are allocated. And no one talks about how dorms are allocated. It's the same as in a small city, for example X, everything goes through a connection, everything.' Furthermore, according to Tea (SG, MED), 'having someone "pushing you" can be an asset when you're applying for a job'. Similarly, Damir (SG, MAT) says: 'We have a tribal-kinship community, me to you and you to me. How does one become rich? First step, call your relatives. I mean awful'. This is a theme also identified by Field (2003), according to whom students with useful connections may be more likely to get a job soon after graduation in comparison to those who have to rely exclusively on their own efforts. To reinforce this point further, Rebeka (SG, MED), whose father is a doctor, says that she is lucky her parents have friends who own a wellness centre specialising in the care of sportspeople; according to Rebeka: 'Currently they only have one doctor, so I see an opportunity for myself there one day. Also, my dad has a private practice, so I automatically have a place to work and I am sure I will be free to do exactly what I am interested in'. In other words, unlike Tea, who recognizes the importance of being well-connected to get a job but does not have such a connection herself, there is a sense of security in Rebeka's answer regarding her post-study career. This distinction between the two students suggests differing levels of advantage with regard to job opportunities, i.e. although both students are second generation students, Rebeka's cultural capital is also reinforced by her social capital.

The discussion of social capital has so far centred on the contribution adults outside the immediate family have on the educational choices (e.g. educational advice by parents' friends, tennis partner, secondary school teachers and career advisor) and achievements (e.g. university enrolment, getting a good grade) of certain students. Attention was drawn to the particular importance of social ties for first generation students in their decision-making process, as well as how capitals work together to reinforce advantage. Corrupt practices were also flagged in the activation of educationally profitable social ties. The role of adults in HE choice making and progress continues in the following section but with a different slant; unlike the previous examples, where the beneficial adult-student social relationship was largely of an informal character, the next section discusses an instance of social ties formalised by the HE institution.

### *'The godfather'*

Two of the interviewed MGO students talked about a somewhat unexpected form of social capital, whose nature particularly illustrates the importance of recognizing social capital as a 'temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.161). Whereas the previous sections concerned differential access to social ties for first and second generation students, as well as students with varying economic means with regard to 'buying' access and progress, this section concerns a social tie which is equally accessible to all students at the faculty irrespective of socio-economic status.

This peculiar form of social capital was mentioned by Ružica (SG, MGO), who talked about a tradition at her faculty called 'the jump', which is the name given to a ceremony marking one's formal entry into the mining guild and which involves jumping over a leather belt at an event organised especially for this purpose. A description and photographs of the ceremony open the faculty's prospectus (see Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2 The MGO 'Jump' event (Source: Faculty prospectus).

Ružica described her involvement in the event as follows:

The first day that we came to the faculty, the dean made a speech and they played the miner's hymn, they were all dressed in mining suits and I thought that was great. And they were offering us all the things we could do at the faculty and then these people came from *Good luck* and they told us to come down to the *Pit* afterwards. The *Pit* is an area in the basement of the faculty. So, a group of us went and we got drinking there (laughs). Anyway, for the first two months of the faculty you have these rehearsals and we had them two, three times a week...

K: And what does one get as a result of this?

Ružica: *You meet a lot of senior students*, you are led by senior students. It ended up being 18 of us and at the beginning 40 of us applied. But a lot of people... I mean, you have to come regularly to rehearsals and a lot of people couldn't or wouldn't do that. So, at the end there was 18 of us and *we all got really close*. We spent nights and days together because of these preparations and *we got really close*. *We became friends*. And you're doing something good for yourself because *every student gets his godfather who takes care of you while you study*. And let's say you get a godfather who is a professor from your faculty, then you get *privileges at the exam* and if it's someone working in your branch, then he can *help you find a job later*.

K: And who's your godfather?

Ružica: I got the greatest godfather. He's the director of X, a big shot, he's often on TV. And you *get a present from your godfather*, a lot of people got money, and others got something symbolic. *You don't have to give anything back*...

K: When did you find out about who your godfather is?

Ružica: Before the ceremony and then at the ceremony you are expected to come up to him and give him your picture because they take photographs of us in the miner's suit and you just introduce yourself. Talk a little to him. But my godfather is constantly travelling...so, I couldn't get hold of him. But *if your godfather is a professor* then you go and see him at the faculty.

In this extract, Ružica touches upon the possibility of forming educationally beneficial formal and informal contacts through an extra-curricular activity. The formal one refers to the role of the 'godfather', acting as a patron, who can apparently either help with exams or future employment or even financially, and the informal one refers to meeting colleagues and making friends which, according to Ružica, makes the university experience more enjoyable. With regard to the former, Ružica remarks: 'It's good to have someone supporting you. One day if I finish this course it would be really good if I had him because he'll be able to get me a job and if he finds me a job then I've got my life sorted'. Here Ružica recognizes the importance her 'godfather' might have for later job opportunities; however, since he seems to be busy a lot of the time, she never manages to meet up with him – the 'potential' resource never gets actualized. In addition, she

remarks that this experience has slowed her down in her studies and she later found it difficult to catch up. She said: 'A lot of people when they become members of *Good luck* and get involved in 'the jump' start doing less well at the faculty'. In other words, although the institution notionally provides the conditions for students to develop a sense of involvement in their higher education setting and to receive help during their studies, which is commendable, in Ružica's case this turns out to be educationally counter-productive. She said that this experience, although helpful for making friends, also contributed to her not doing well in her exams in the first semester, which then affected her exams in the second semester.

This practice is also an interesting instance of the possibility of securing educational benefits in an asymmetrical relationship. Unlike the example of students paying for entry into a course and getting pass grades, where the possibility of institutionalized cultural capital is reciprocated with economic capital, the relationship between the 'godfather' and the student is advantageous to one particular side; as Ružica remarks: 'You don't have to give anything back'. Similarly to the examples of educational advice given by Fabijan's tennis partner or Lovro's career advisor, Ružica's example illustrates connections characterised by unequal footing, where there does not seem to be an 'implicit reciprocal contract' (Ream 2003, p.251). Bourdieu's assumption of reciprocity underscoring social capital does not seem to capture these scenarios and this issue is discussed in more detail in the following section on colleagues.

In the previous two sections, the focus has been on the adult-student relationship and how it can benefit students' educational choices, progress and later job opportunities. In particular, this section has illustrated an example of social capital sources and resources as formalised by the HE institution. The following section turns to the contribution colleagues make to the academic and social aspects of studying.

### *Colleagues*

The role of peers in the educational process has been acknowledged in research on the relationship between social capital and school achievement. Meir (1999), for example, notes that relationships with friends can have both a positive and negative effect on young people's educational attainment. Similarly, authors such as Munn (2000), acknowledge the negative educational effects membership in particular groups may have, such as those 'which reinforce resistance to schools, exemplified by truancing or violence towards pupils who comply with

school norms and standards' (p. 174). However, as Brooks (2007) has observed, research into young people's experiences within HE has paid little attention to peer relationships and how these might impact academic progress. This section explores the role of colleagues, as a potential form of social capital, on two levels. The first pertains to direct educational returns from interpersonal relationships, and the second refers to the indirect educational returns from the general learning environment.

With regard to the former, when asked to recollect the first week of their course, most of the interviewed students focused on the social rather than academic aspects of 'fitting in'. For example, Fran's (FG, FTB) experience was that: 'it was all strange at first, like in secondary school, until you meet a few people...you know, people matter.' According to Filip (SG, MAT), 'I didn't know anyone and that was a little...everyone knew someone else from somewhere and I didn't know anyone and I found that kind of stupid.' Similarly, Tea (SG, MED) said: 'there are a few people from my previous grammar school...we were in the same shift, so it was easier to find one's way around. It's easier when you've got someone like that'. The difference between Tea, Fran and Filip in this respect is that whereas Fran and Filip did not know any of their colleagues when they enrolled into the course, Tea had already known some people from before. And this distinction matters since, although all of the interviewed students belonged to a friendship group on their course when I interviewed them, at the very beginning of the course it was those who had already known some of their colleagues from before who felt more at ease with their new course experience. Importantly, these students tended to be from Zagreb; for example, the social integration of Jelena (FG, EEC), a student from Zagreb, is captured in her interview when she says 'from my class, well almost half of the class, fifteen people came here so it wasn't difficult for me to fit in'. This raises the question of the social implications of student mobility, especially since, apart from the 'Jump' event at the MGO, there were no other institutional practices at any of the researched faculties that facilitated introductions.

The student interviews suggested that good relationships with colleagues were important both non-academically and academically. Non-academically, 'getting along' with your colleagues was mentioned as making the course experience more enjoyable. For example, for Mathea (SG, DES): 'Sometimes I felt better about going to the faculty than staying at home...the people are generally ok and the group I hang out with is great. I'm really happy about this because in primary school I couldn't wait to go because the groups were really [makes a disappointed face]'. Academically, certain collegial ties resulted in educational benefits; for example, students

mentioned the importance of colleagues for getting hold of and exchanging notes and study materials. Fran (FG, FTB) describes his colleagues as: 'we help each other. If there are any problems, I help them, they help me. It's the same for our seminars, we try and make it easier for each other'. For Andrej (SG, MGO), colleagues are crucial for getting by on the course:

K: Do people help each other on the course?

Andrej: *That's how we get by* [laughs]. Two people always go to the lectures and sign the others in. Everyone signs everyone else in more or less, we know the index numbers...it's quite a collegial atmosphere...there isn't a lot of jealousy...when someone passes an exam and the other person doesn't no one is going to say 'oh, you didn't pass' and the person who didn't pass won't feel I don't know how. It's normal that we'll all just go out for a drink.

Similarly, Melita (FG, MGO) says: 'you get someone else to write your name in.' Both these last excerpts not only identify the significant role colleagues can have in the educational process but also highlight how an institutional practice, such as having to sign in for obligatory lessons, encourages the formation and activation of social ties which might have negative consequences. In other words, although they benefit the individual in that s/he does not have to attend the lectures s/he does not want to, it also discourages academic engagement. In this sense, social capital can facilitate negative educational repercussions, confirming Ream's (2003) contention that the availability of social capital 'is not always synonymous with its convertibility into valued educational outcomes' (p.245). This is an important point since authors such as Portes (1998) have suggested that research literature on social capital strongly emphasizes its positive consequences rather than the negative ones.

Types of exams are a further example of how faculty practices activate social ties which result in cheating. Fabijan (FG, MED) remarks:

I heard that at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering they hide their tests from each other, that doesn't happen here. If I have the chance I'll say, I don't know *12c, 13b*, so *we help each other*. And what I really liked when we took the Anatomy exam is that we all helped each other. Eight or nine of us would get together and *we studied together...and when we were writing the test we always tried to help each other*, so it wasn't like we'd hide stuff from each other, so that I could get a 5 and he could get a 4. I think that's stupid and I am totally not that type of guy and I haven't noticed that happening.

Fabijan's extract illustrates how the form of certain exams, such as multiple-choice type exams, can encourage the activation of social ties, which might be more difficult with, for example, essay type questions. The excerpt illustrates an instance of social capital where the positive/negative delineation is more complex than Portes (1998) suggests, i.e. the cooperation between students during exams seems positive short-term, since it can help individuals do well, but this can also become negative in the long-term since this knowledge might be important for the students' future profession, as well as that the individual is taking part in a corrupt activity. Indeed, the students at all of the faculties mentioned the issue of cheating at exams. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether the consequences of the activation of social ties are always good for the individual. It is important to acknowledge situations that are more complex.

Fabijan's interview extract points to a further example of social capital activation where students get together to study for their exams. A similar practice was also mentioned by Željka (SG) at DES:

It means a lot to me to be able to go with the girls for a coffee and *talk about a project* because on your own you can't, I mean you can come to some solutions, but when you share it with someone else and you talk about it, then really great things can come about. We've accepted that you can't work alone because you'll do it much worse than when you communicate with someone.

Similarly, Jelena (FG, EEC) says: 'I mean you can't ask your professors all the time and it's easier to ask someone your own age. I don't know, it's easier to ask for a more detailed explanation'. This practice of helping each other educationally happens spontaneously rather than through any collaborative learning attempts initiated by university staff through organized study halls or mentoring programmes.

A particularly useful internet forum for collaboration, set up by students at the EEC and MAT, enables students to help each other in a virtual rather than physical space. According to Nino (SG, EEC):

If it wasn't for the forum I don't know how I'd...you're home at two in the morning and there are definitely at least thirty people on it, these people are up until five...so you do maths and you ask how is this done, why is this like this and someone always helps you. I mean there are 1500, 2000 of us registered, you can study from home and always ask someone.

The beneficial 'virtual' social ties can have theoretical implications for how social capital is understood in contemporary educational settings, since not only do such information forums provide a sizeable network of connections that can be mobilised irrespective of social markers but they also do not necessarily assume reciprocity. With regard to the latter, as Portes (2000) notes, Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital assumes that 'people intentionally built their relations for the benefits that they would bring later' (p.2). Ream (2003) also notes that 'Reciprocity is the *quid pro quo* function of social capital embodied in person-to-person relationship investment with the normative expectation of return' (p.239). Damir's (SG, MAT) earlier quoted assertion that Croatia functions like 'a tribal-kinship community, me to you and you to me' reflects this reciprocity. However, in the case of the internet forum, the relations that can yield useful resources do not necessarily involve 'building' or 'investment'. In this sense, the notion of social capital as reciprocal may not be useful for capturing connections that exist in virtual space, nor those mentioned in earlier sections where the relationship was asymmetrical (e.g. 'godfather', teachers, career advisor).

This drawing on colleagues for academic support differs from Brooks' (2007) research findings, addressing the role of university friends and peers on students' HE experiences:

Across the sample as a whole, almost all of the students claimed that, when they talked to their friends about their academic work, it was almost always about generic issues such as workloads and deadlines, rather than the substantive content of their courses (p.699).

Unfortunately, Brooks does not make it clear whether her interviewees were talking about friends from the course or university friends in general. This distinction matters in the narratives of the Croatian students, most of whom said that they did talk to their course friends about the course content but addressed study issues more generally with their friends outside the course, which would thus resonate with Brooks' findings.

Taking the discussion on peer influences further, one of the questions in the student questionnaire examined how often students talked to their friends about various topics such as daily political and/or social events, literature, movies and TV programmes, music, art, sports and studies (Likert-type scale ranging from 'never' to 'often'). Unfortunately, the question was framed in a way that does not enable a distinction between whether students had in mind friends from their faculty, friends who are not from their faculty or both when they were answering the

question. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note (see Figure 6.3) how the majority of students reported that they 'often' talked to their friends about their studies (69.9%) and music (55.7%).

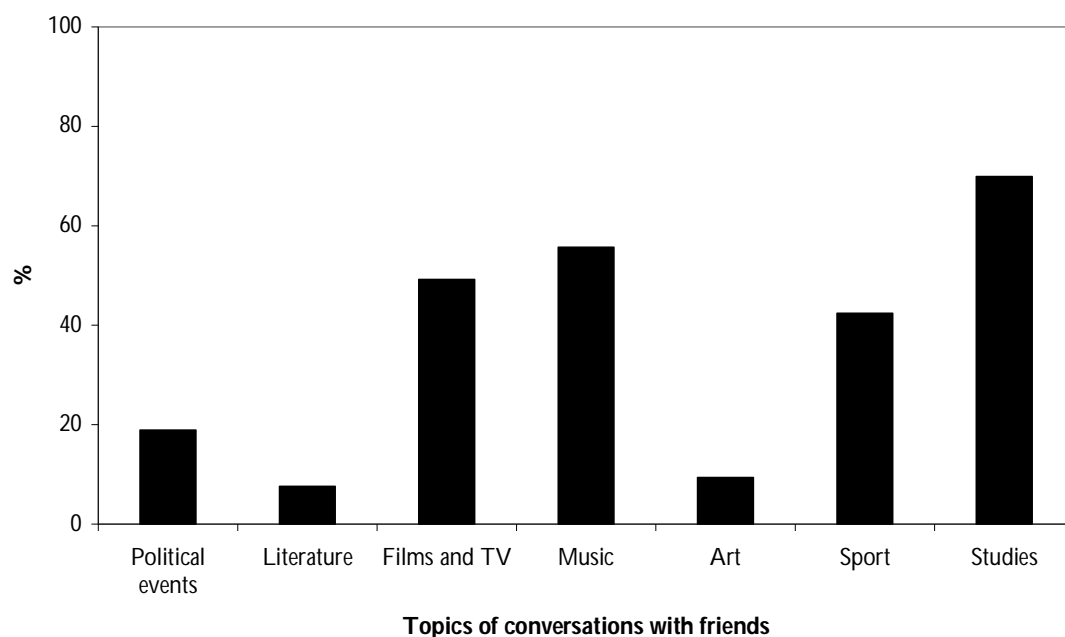


Figure 6.3 Reported frequency of talking to friends about particular topics.

\*The percentages reported refer to students who answered 'often' to this question.

Importantly, it was mentioned earlier that the student interviews suggested that collegial ties mattered academically and the analysis of questionnaire responses reinforces this conclusion. Spearman's rank order correlation was significant and positive ( $r(618) = .176$ ,  $p < .001$ ) pointing to the conclusion that higher expectation of successful enrolment is associated with talking to friends about one's studies more often. The observed cell frequencies show that out of the total number of students who reported they talked to their friends about their studies 'often' (69.9%), 62.1 per cent expected to enrol into the second year successfully, as opposed to only 7.9 per cent who did not. No statistically significant difference was found between first and second generation students with regard to frequency of talking to friends about studies ( $U = 43690.0$ ,  $z = -.501$ ,  $p = .671$ ).

In general, the Croatian students interviewed suggested that collegial ties mattered to them academically; however, a difference can be observed in the extent of this academic support between students at different faculties, which brings this section to a discussion of the indirect influence of the student environment. This distinction seems to generally correspond to Portes' (1998) impression of Bourdieu's sociological analysis of social capital as grounded in the

relationships between actors, on the one hand, and between an individual actor and a group, on the other. With reference to the latter relationship, a generally cooperative rather than competitive student environment was described by interviewees across the faculties, but there was a difference in the nature of this cooperation. For example, at DES, students tended to talk about their educational environment and colleagues academically, whereas at the MGO, the emphasis was on socialising. The following extracts illustrate these differences in institutional climate:

- (1) There is definitely *a cooperative environment at this faculty and there is a dose of sarcasm, humour, it's not like an uptight atmosphere, people are not closed.* (Melita, FG, MGO)
- (2) *We're kind of all for having fun, we're all for some action, everyone is like let's go out, let's go here, let's go there, somehow we'll rarely say let's sit down and study or something like that. We're all for some kind of action. Let's got to the park and have a beer.* (Ružica, SG, MGO)
- (3) I expected it to be more laid back, that we'd have more time, a lot more fun, but it's not like that. I have *even less time and I have even less fun.* (Bartol, SG, DES)
- (4) *Everything is about the faculty.* You wake up in the morning worrying about the faculty, you go to the faculty, you eat in-between faculty time, you go to sleep worrying about the faculty, so the faculty is everything. (Katarina, FG, DES)

These extracts are generally representative of the student narratives about their institutional settings. Students at the MGO, a faculty with low retention rates (none of the interviewed students enrolled into the second year of study within the prescribed time frame) would largely talk about their colleagues as people who like to enjoy themselves and spend time socialising; in contrast, students at DES, a faculty with high retention rates (all of the interviewed students enrolled into the second year of study within the prescribed time frame), placed their emphasis on studying. At DES, many of the students talked about how their course had affected their free time in that they have very little of it, which points to the possibility that, while colleagues might help each other on an individual level directly, there is also a more macro level of social capital pertaining to the general learning environment and peer group academic values which may influence student behaviour. For example, according to Tea (SG, MED), students at MED 'are always sleepy, they're always pale, they drink coffee all the time, study a lot, they don't go out that much'. On the other hand, being at a faculty where one's colleagues are perceived as non-studious (Ružica, SG, MGO: 'we'll rarely say let's sit down and study') may influence an individual indirectly in an academically adverse way.

In addition to mentioning their course colleagues as a source of academic and non-academic support, the interviewed students also mentioned the importance of emotional support from close friends beyond their course. However, such emotional support was not recognised by students as having a significant impact on course progress and therefore it will not be addressed further since it does not seem to take on the form of social capital in this educational context. The research study also examined friends' influence on continuation to HE and choice of course. When asked about the extent to which friends had influenced their choice of course, 14.6 per cent of students noted 'mostly' and 1.6 per cent noted 'fully'. No significant difference between first and second generation students was observed with respect to extent of friends' influence. Jelena (FG, EEC), one of the students interviewed, explained that she indicated in the questionnaire that her friends had 'mostly' influenced her choice of course because: 'I talked to them a lot about why come to FER [EEC] and everyone who I respected as smart, good, wise and intelligent came here. So, I thought that would be wise for me too'. Jelena put 'mostly' in her questionnaire because she was also advised by a professional career advisor. Although a relatively small percentage of students reported that their friends had influenced their continuation to HE (9.2%), it is important to acknowledge that, for some students, friends did act as social capital in an educational sense.

#### *Birds of a feather flock together?*

So far, the emphasis in this chapter has been on the educational benefits provided by course colleagues without an exploration of the criteria according to which such beneficial contacts are formed. Such 'criteria' might be irrelevant at EEC and MAT when it comes to beneficial ties activated in virtual spaces; however, when it comes to contact in physical space, students articulated different factors which influence private group formation.

Most of the students interviewed mentioned personality and interests compatibility as the main criteria for forming closer collegial ties. This can be illustrated by statements such as: 'you find people who suit you according to some character traits' (Melita, FG, MGO), 'it's how I like someone as a person' (Fabijan, FG, MED) or 'character similarities' (Bartol, SG, DES). Further examples of criteria not necessarily connected to 'social carriers' include Mili's (FG, MAT) observation that 'those that are like smarter, they're a group of their own' and several students at the EEC mentioned music tastes as the basis for private group formation: 'music connects people. For example, I've never seen punks hanging out with, let's say ordinary people, they're

always together' (Matilda, FG, EEC), 'there are students who get together around KSET [student club of the EEC] and they've opted for a particular type of music, so they're more connected in that sense' (Tanja, SG, EEC).

Although non-social criteria were prevalent in the interviews of the Croatian students, social 'sign-vehicles' (Goffman 1959), such as regional grouping, were also mentioned as impacting the development of social ties. According to Holdsworth's (2006) research on student experiences at selected British universities, most of the students argued that universities were like 'social melting pots', where students from all different backgrounds mix well, with the ideal that it 'does not matter who you are' (p.507). In contrast, Mili (FG, MAT) says: 'there are those from Zagreb who know each other really well, so of course they hang out with each other more...and we have, I mean us from Međimurje, Varaždin, I feel that we're also closer.' Fabijan (FG, MED) says: 'I have noticed that Dalmatians like to stick together.' These extracts illustrate how coming from the same part of Croatia can serve as a basis for establishing social ties, and students from Dalmatia were particularly flagged in the interviews as keeping together. For example, Fran (FG, FTB) says: 'Dalmatians keep more or less to themselves'. Similarly, according to Marijana (SG, MAT), 'people from Split [city in Dalmatia] stick together'. A stereotypical image of people from Dalmatia is captured in Damir's (SG, MAT) interview: 'I can definitely tell in my group who's from Dalmatia and who isn't. When you hear people shouting up to the other corridor, I definitely know they're Dalmatians and also according to their dialect. I don't know maybe it's a stereotype but they are louder, aggressive. I don't know, they're just missing a neon sign "it's me, I am here and pay attention to me".' These regional distinctions are reflected in the University of Zagreb's student clubs, such as students from Istria, students from Dalmatia and students from Međimurje.

Students also mentioned the social 'sign-vehicles' (Goffman 1959) of financial status and gender as criteria for forming collegial ties. For example, Fabijan (FG, MED) says:

I've also noticed that, and I don't know whether that's the case just at this faculty or others too, that people are being evaluated according to, I don't know, how you dress, what your financial situation is like and then they're like 'well I won't hang out with you. It's beneath me'.

Lovro (FG, FTB) has the impression that the girls at his faculty, who form the majority of the student body, tend to form their own groups, highlighting the gender dimension of group formation. What these extracts illustrate is how certain social boundaries (as related to regional

membership, economic capital and gender) exist in relation to collegial ties and therefore the benefits they render. They echo Jamieson's (1998) general claim that friendships are constrained by social divisions of class, gender and ethnicity, rather than Holdsworth's (2006) observation that 'it does not matter who you are'.

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the contributions social ties make to the educational choices and experiences of the interviewed students and to relate these to Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital. Rather than exploring the volume of social capital, the chapter emphasized important instances of social capital shaping HE choices and experiences, such as useful educational and employment advice, help with exams, financial support, study materials, and emotional and practical support. With regard to choice, it was argued that the social contacts that first generation students drew upon were mostly individually generated, whereas second generation students also had 'organised' access to their social contacts through their family. Here Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as relating to 'durable networks' was deemed as useful for capturing the experiences of second generation students but not first generation students, and it was proposed that the value of weaker associations should be recognised. In order to address the serendipitous nature of the latter's social contacts, it is suggested that educational and employment advice should be formalised within the secondary school system and the HE system, particularly since it was recognised that teachers seem to have had a more prominent role in the educational decision-making processes of first, rather than second, generation students.

Turning to experiences, it was argued that colleagues can be a source of social capital in the form of academic and non-academic support, both in virtual and physical spaces, and instances were flagged where the activation of this aspect of social capital had both positive and/or negative consequences. In addition, institutional practices which might facilitate the development of beneficial collegial social ties were identified, such as organising induction day activities or faculty-initiated collaborative learning. Furthermore, teachers were identified as a source of social capital when they help with admission or grades, and 'the godfather' was identified at one faculty as being a potential source of employment opportunities, financial benefits and good marks. In relation to this, the section also discussed the reciprocal nature of social ties and offered examples of social contacts which do not easily fit into Bourdieu's assumption of reciprocity. Finally, regional membership, economic capital and gender were identified as social criteria which could influence the development of social ties.

In their research on HE choice, Reay, David and Ball (2005) recognized the role of material circumstances in the decision-making process of working class students, where the majority of these students were identified as 'operating within narrow circumscribed spaces of choice' (p.85). Similarly, Hutchings and Archer (2001) identify financial factors as possibly deterring young people from low-income families from applying to university, since they might perceive the costs of HE as beyond their means. Authors cite the case of Marcia, a black female 19-year old student, who says: 'like the fee thing, because I want to do a four year course, but because of the money I'm just going to do a three year course instead' (p.78). With regard to HE progress, Leathwood and O'Connell's (2003) longitudinal study exploring non-traditional students' experiences throughout their degree courses at an HE institution in England emphasized financial difficulties as contributing to their struggle. This finding resonates with Cooke et al.'s (2004) study of student perceptions of university life, which showed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds potentially experience a more difficult time at university since they are more likely to be in part-time employment resulting from financial difficulties. The negative impacts of work during term time on the achievements of working class students is also recognized by Leathwood and Read (2009).

This chapter focuses on the weight of costs for the HE choices and experiences of Croatian students participating in this study. It is generally argued across the following sections that since there is no loan system developed for educational purposes in Croatia, nor sufficient number or amount of scholarships, the role of family support becomes crucial. More specifically, the section on choice explores how the choice of HE course can be restricted for students with lower levels of financial means, as in the case of a student who has to choose a shorter course of study because of financial difficulties. Furthermore, the section on the costs of study and university progress illustrates how the university experience involves both costs internal to the institution, such as tuition fees and study materials, as well as external costs especially significant for students living away from home. The distinction between students living at home and away is identified as particularly relevant to understanding student experiences, since non-fee paying students living at home, irrespective of their family's financial means, do not seem to have substantial financial concerns weighing on their progress; which is not a scenario shared by less privileged students living away from home. Finally, throughout the sections, the processes by which institutions

reinforce economic inequalities are recognized and the chapter ends with a brief exploration of how economic capital in its embodied form shapes distinctions between students.

### *(Un)restricted choices*

This section attempts to unpick how differing levels of economic capital can contribute to students' HE choices. It draws on several interview extracts with students possessing varying amounts of economic capital and is embedded in a general distinction between the choices of students who reported having financial constraints and those who did not mention having financial difficulties; this distinction is closely related to whether a student has sufficient financial support from his or her parents.

For the interviewed students who mentioned their family had financial difficulties, the choice of HE course was constrained. An extract from an interview with Melita, a first generation student at MGO illustrates this point. Although in the questionnaire Melita estimated her family's income as 'average', it appears that because of her poor relationship with her mother she does not have her family's financial support and this influences her choice of course. Melita says:

*I had a specific situation at home, I didn't always get on well with my mother...and then I realized I didn't want to depend on my parents for too long, to be dependent...I wanted to become independent as soon as possible. So, I decided on a four year course. And my favourite subjects were maths, physics, chemistry and stuff like that, so I looked around at the technical faculties, when it was still the four-year system and I got interested in the Mining, Geology and Oil Faculty, like what is that? So, I asked around about it, I liked the courses, it was an eight semester course, so I had already made the decision at the age of 15, 16.*

Melita is an example of someone whose choice of course is restricted for financial reasons: she chooses a four-year course over a six-year course. Importantly, although her parents have the financial means to support her through university (she describes her parents as leading 'a comfortable life'), Melita cannot activate her familial economic capital because of her relations with her mother<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup> A methodological point to take away from this is that using parents' possession of economic capital as a proxy for the student's volume of economic capital can give an incomplete picture of the actual resources available.

Furthermore, what the extract illustrates is the importance of what Reay (2004b) has referred to as 'emotional' capital; in this context identified as supportive parenting. This is a particularly relevant issue in the Croatian HE context since there is no system of loans developed for studying purposes, nor is there a sufficient number or amount of needs-based scholarships<sup>34</sup>, and as a result students tend to largely depend on their parents for financial support. Indeed, according to the questionnaire results, 90.8 per cent of students reported that their costs of study were covered by their parents and 12.3 per cent indicated that they also receive a scholarship. These results conform to Galland and Oberti's (2000) research findings from France: 'A close look at the structure of student budgets confirms that students remain largely dependent on the family; parental financial aid constitutes the primary source of student income' (p.112).

The implications of this are that, on the one hand, students do not have debt concerns after completing their HE course which surface in similar research from England (e.g. Thomas, 2002); however, on the other hand (and this is especially acute for students from economically modest backgrounds who live away from home), there are very few financial alternatives for students whose parents cannot support them. It is therefore not surprising that when students were asked to estimate their family's income in the questionnaire, 47.9 per cent of students reported their family's financial status was 'good' (43.7%) or 'very good' (4.2%), 45.7 per cent as average, and only 6.4 per cent as 'bad' (5.6%) or 'very bad' (0.8%). What these percentages suggest is that the majority of the examined student cohort is financially privileged.

The issue of financially constrained choices can be further illustrated by the case of Lovro. Unlike Melita, whose parents have the economic capital to support her studies but she cannot/does not want to activate this economic capital, Lovro (FG, FTB) has a family that provides him with emotional support but cannot afford to pay for his study costs. Lovro is one of the few people who estimated his family income as 'very bad' in the questionnaire. As a result, Lovro's only option to continue to HE is to become a cadet of the Croatian army on a programme funded by the Croatian Ministry of Defence, which provides food and lodgings for students with a view to employing them afterwards. As Lovro notes 'I don't know how else I'd be able to study'. However, this programme is highly selective and restricts the choices of what cadets can study. The implications of this for Lovro are that he is not able to choose what he really wants to study, i.e. veterinary studies or forestry, but rather he has to enrol into the FTB faculty, which was one of the choices the Ministry would fund.

---

<sup>34</sup> According to Farnell (2009), there are 10,000 state maintenance awards per 130,000 students at Croatian universities and 30 per cent of these are needs-based.

Both Melita's and Lovro's accounts illustrate how inadequate familial finances can shape the opportunity to go to HE and study a particular course. A further illustration of such restricted choices can be recognized in how Mili (FG, MAT) describes her choice of course: 'I really wanted to study design, but I didn't have...I didn't know how to draw, actually I never had drawing in school, and since my parents couldn't afford to pay for a teacher to teach me, I decided to do maths. I didn't know anything else'. It is interesting to note that four out of the five students interviewed at DES paid for private lessons to prepare for their entrance exam. These examples of financially constrained choices resonate with similar research from the UK (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, Hutchings and Archer 2001).

Such reported restricted choices for students with low economic capital contrast sharply with the choices of students whose families are financially well-off. For example, Danijela is a medical student from Zagreb who gets on well with her university educated parents and estimates her family's income as 'above average'. Unlike Lovro and Melita, Danijela has the privilege of choosing her course purely on academic grounds:

Well, my parents studied at the Faculty of Philosophy, my father is a Professor of Sociology and my mother is a researcher...both in the social sciences...but I guess my dad found it all boring, so he *bought the book 'The Selfish Gene' which I read and found interesting*. So, then *I thought I would study molecular biology, but when I asked around to see whether people working within molecular biology actually did what I was interested in doing I found out that they didn't really and I was told that it would be better for me to study medicine*.

As the extract illustrates, Danijela's concern in choosing a course is to study what she is interested in and, in making this decision, she has the support of her relatively well-off parents who, judging by her account, are a source of institutionalised cultural capital (parents have HE degrees), objectified cultural capital (books) and social capital (in the last instance Danijela is advised by her father's friends). Similarly, Andrej (SG, MGO), who estimates his family's income as 'good', does not mention any financial worries. Indeed, when talking about his choice of course he says: 'I went to the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, wrote the entrance exam, did pretty well, got in, fee-paying, non-fee paying, it wouldn't matter'. Such financial ease can also be observed in Bartol's (SG, DES) account: 'well, I've already been to a private secondary school and it's 9000 kuna [approx. £900] per year, which isn't a lot'. For these students financial matters do not seem to be an issue.

The above section addressed how differing levels of economic capital can shape students' HE choices. However, as Rhodes and Nevill (2004) note: 'It is insufficient that non-traditional groups merely gain access; they must also stay, progress and be successful in degree completion if espoused social justice is to be achieved' (p.180). This section takes up this point and looks at the varied study costs students are expected to cover and how these affect the educational experiences of students with differing economic means. Particular attention is given to direct costs, such as tuition fees and study materials, as well as indirect costs pertaining to more general living expenses.

To set the context with regard to tuition fees, students in the Croatian HE system fall into four categories according to fee paying status: those whose tuition fees are paid by MSES (successful applicants), those who pay for the tuition fees themselves (less successful applicants – at certain faculties this amount increases depending on their position on the entrance ranking list), and part-time students and foreign students who pay full fees themselves. As mentioned, full-time Croatian students who do not achieve a high enough position on the ranking list have to incur payment of tuition fees. To illustrate this fee determining process at EEC, the tuition fees for the first 300 students on the ranking list are paid by the MSES. Students ranked on positions 301-600 pay fees which grow linearly from 24,57 kuna to 7,370 kuna (approx. £3 to £870); the fees are revised after the first year of study on the basis of how successful the student is (as measured by grade point average). All students from the position 600 onwards, as well as foreign citizens, have to pay the full annual tuition fee of 7,370 kunas throughout their studies. This ranking position is determined according to the following criteria: (a) achievements from previous secondary education; (b) results of the entrance exam and (c) special knowledge, skills or ability. Annual tuition fees for university or professional studies are arranged in three basic categories: (1) 5,000 kunas (approx. £590) for studies in social sciences, humanities and mathematics; (2) 6,700 kunas (approx. £790) for studies of physics, and technical and biotechnical fields; and (3) 8,400 kunas (approx. £990) for studies of art and studies in the fields of biomedical and natural sciences (OECD 2006, p. 77). Dolenc, Marušić and Puzić (2006) quote ESIB data which shows that the average tuition fee in European higher education is between approx. 400 GBP and 800 GBP which positions Croatian tuition fees as higher than the European average.

In the conducted interviews, both fee-paying and non-fee paying students questioned the fairness of the fee-determining practice. For example, Tea (SG), a fee paying student at MED, talks about the arbitrariness of the ranking list according to which her fee status was determined:

The number of points you get is just not realistic, *there's luck involved you know*. And if someone can't afford to pay for the course...I mean there were a lot of people who were better ranked than I was and *they all had to give up because their parents couldn't pay for them*. If one has to pay for studying, then *everyone should participate at a lower price and also some benefits, loans need to be secured...so that we have equality and not lottery*.

Tea makes two important points in this extract. Firstly, she has the impression that there is an element of 'luck' in the admission procedures and, secondly, that fee paying status can prevent less financially able students from taking up their university places. Both these points were echoed by several other interviewees at different faculties. For example, with regard to admission procedures, Katarina (FG, DES), also a fee-paying student, says: 'I don't think that you can evaluate anyone according to the entrance exam. Especially because we're such a country and society where you can bribe someone to get in without a problem'; similarly, according to Tanja (SG, EEC), a non-fee paying student, 'success on the entrance exam is so relative'. The weight of the exam's relativity becomes particularly acute with respect to the possibility that students are unable to take up their positions because of financial constraints. As Nino (SG, EEC) remarks: 'My parents told me that even if I didn't get in without paying they would pay for me...and if you can pay then it's...then you just have to pass the minimum threshold because a lot of them give up because they don't have the money'. In other words, the person ranked higher on the ranking list may have to give up his or her university place for someone who was less successful but can afford to pay for his or her studies, as was the case with Nino.

However, tuition fees are not the only institutional cost certain students have to meet. Once enrolled, there are also indirect costs relating to buying books, photocopying and even paying for official slips in order to register for an exam. And in relation to this, an institutional effect can be observed. For example, study costs were reported to be particularly high at DES, where students are expected to pay for the materials they work with, and relatively low at EEC where most of the materials are available online. To illustrate this, Mathea (SG) and Katarina (FG) from DES say the following:

(1) Mathea: *We need to buy a lot of materials...*for example in typography, we use a bundle of papers each week...and then, I don't know, if someone works with metal, for example one girl paid 3000 kuna [approx. £350] for her first work and ended up getting a four [B grade]. *A lot of money is spent.* I mean it's not a problem for me, but there are some people...I mean, everyone could do with spending less for things like that.

(2) Katarina: *'it's quite expensive, really expensive...*one printing, then sticking that on a base, 110 kuna [approx. £13]'.

In contrast, students at the EEC seem to be in a more favourable position. According to Nino (SG), 'you can get all the materials off the internet'. Petar (FG) also says 'most of it is on the internet, so we just take it all from there' and Tanja (SG) is glad that the library is well equipped: 'It's really important for me that the library is well equipped with the literature, so that I don't have to buy it'. This observed difference between the two institutions as far as providing study materials illustrates how institutional characteristics can aggravate lack of economic capital. The following two extracts from students at MED further this argument. For Rebeka (SG, MED), who estimated her family's income as 'good', money does not seem to be an issue. Having said this, she does photocopy materials rather than buy them, but this is more of a choice for her than a necessity. Rebeka says:

Someone's always got notes to photocopy or I borrow from a senior. Ok, some of the books you need to buy, like for anatomy or I just borrow them. Actually, that's the great thing with shifts, because we can exchange stuff.

When Rebeka was asked about whether the books were expensive, she said: 'Yeah, quite expensive. The anatomy book is around 500 kunas [approx. £60].' Although Rebeka recognizes the costs of materials, there is an ease in the way she experiences the costs, arguably resulting from the financial security her family provides. This ease can be further highlighted by juxtaposing Rebeka's excerpt to Tea's (SG, average economic status, MED) interview where she emphasizes the importance of getting by 'as cheaply as possible'.

Well, *you need to buy a book* for certain subjects...for anatomy you definitely have to buy an atlas...but *most of us get by with photocopying*, someone may borrow from one of the students in higher year groups or from the library, and then the word spreads that that person has the book and we photocopy it. *You find the cheapest option. I mostly photocopy stuff because the costs would be too, too high for me.* For a book you use for a month and then probably never again. Some teachers even

check in lectures and group work who has the original book, but we always find our way somehow, *as cheaply as possible*.

Apart from touching upon the extent to which varying degrees of economic capital influence one's concerns and practices relating to the costs of HE, the above excerpts illustrate two important issues. Firstly, the interviews show how institutional characteristics, such as a poorly equipped library and teachers demanding that students have textbook originals (often authored by the teachers themselves), can aggravate economic inequalities rather than attempt to institutionally overcome them. Secondly, the excerpts illustrate the importance of social capital (in the form of friendships) for obtaining study materials; social capital seems to be at its highest in this study context when the student can call upon not only colleagues in their own group for help but also colleagues from other groups, as well as senior colleagues. However, it is not only such wide social networks that are activated for obtaining the required study materials; for example, in Rebeka's case, certain materials are available to her through her father who was himself a student at MED. In summary, these examples indicate how institutional deprivation (e.g. insufficient study materials) requires the activation of different types of capital (economic, social and cultural) which students do not have in equal measure, rendering some students more privileged than others.

Moving on from institutional costs, in order to locate more specifically the discussion on economic capital and its influences on student experiences, it is useful to make a 'spatial' distinction between the material concerns of students who live at home with their parents and students who live on their own<sup>35</sup>, since these living arrangements have different economic repercussions. Students of non-fee paying status living at home did not mention material concerns as impinging on their university experience, irrespective of their family's financial conditions; with the caveat that there were only two students interviewed who estimated their family's income as 'very bad' (Jelena) or 'bad' (Damir) who lived at home. However, for these students university life was constructed as a continuation of secondary schooling with respect to finances, and there was an assumption that their parents would support them. The university life of students living away from home, in contrast, also includes costs such as paying rent and bills either in private or university accommodation, as well as paying for food and transport (both within Zagreb, but also to their hometown). In other words, their educational expenses are higher than for those students living at home.

---

<sup>35</sup> According to questionnaire results, 44.2 per cent of students live in their family home.

Student interviews suggest that not all students in this 'living away' category feel the weight of these investments equally. That is, several students who estimated their family's income as 'average' talked about the burden of costs, but this did not seem to impinge on their study progress. On the other hand, a student who estimated his family's income as 'very bad' mentioned his financial situation as having educational implications. To illustrate these observations, Fabijan (FG, MED), who estimates his family's income as 'average', says the following:

K: How are you doing financially?

Fabijan (FG, MED): Well, there's 1000 kuna [approx. £120] *I pay for accommodation, and then there's the bills, but they don't come out to much...but, on the financial side, I have my parents and a little something I earned and they won't even let me spend that.* They tell me I should save that because I will need it. But I still use it when I need to buy a book for example. I mean, I just feel embarrassed. I have money on my account and it just sits there while *my dad struggles. He does a lot of work on the side you know. I remember once I had to buy this expensive book and he took an extra night shift job and bought it for me. I mean it's not that we're at a bare minimum, but still. My dad tells me that it's for me to study and they would take care of the rest.*

Fabijan's study expenses are felt by his family; for example, his father took on an extra job to cover the costs of a book. Fabijan's example illustrates the sacrifices less privileged families might have to make to support their children's education. Another example of a student who mentions the burden of financial costs is Fran (FG, FTB), who also estimated his family's income as 'average':

*Studying is a financial burden for me because it's only my dad who works, though he works in Slovenia, he's a driver and has a fairly good salary, so he can finance me for the time being...*and I pay 800 kunas [approx. £95] for the flat and all that... I mean I need at least 1000 kunas [approx. £120] per month, and *there's a whole family at home that needs stuff. So, it's a real burden.* And there is no possibility of a scholarship before the second or third year.

In the above cases, the accumulation of costs and their weight are connected to living away from home, since these living arrangements are costly. Both accounts suggest that such financial constraints colour their student experiences, since this is a 'burden' for them; at the same time this does not seem to have an influence on their study progress. Indeed, both these students successfully enrolled into the second year of study.

However, for two interviewed students who estimated their family's income as 'average' (Petar) and 'very bad' (Lovro) and who live away from home, financial constraints seem to directly impact on their study progress. Lovro (FG, FTB) and Petar (FG, EEC) were both enrolled in the cadet programme funded by the Croatian Ministry of Defence. For both these students, the opportunity to study at university level would not have been possible without the Ministry's programme since their parents were unable to financially support them. Both these students do not enrol successfully into their second year of studies since their military obligations interfere with their student responsibilities. The following extracts illustrate this:

Lovro: *We had army lectures on Saturday's and Sunday's. Maybe if I had worked like an idiot I would have made it, but my days were just full. We would go to sleep at 2am and we would wake up at 6. Can you imagine? And then you would wake up in the morning, stand in line, stupid...so, we couldn't take exams or go to our faculties, but we had to train.*

Petar: I wouldn't suggest to anyone to be a cadet and study at FER [EEC] because it's *difficult to balance* one and the other.

In other words, the military programme enables Lovro and Petar to take up their place at the two faculties, but it also impedes their progress. Both these cases illustrate Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) claim that 'subjects from the most disadvantaged classes are those most likely to be crushed by the weight of their social destiny' (p.25). This is also identified in Archer and Hutchings' (2000) study where their respondents suggested 'that poorer students are more likely to fail because they will be preoccupied with their financial situation' (p.562).

A further extract from Lovro's interview highlights an important interaction between institutional characteristics and economic capital. According to Lovro:

You know what happens? All those who go to better faculties drop out and then they are only left with people from the Faculty of Traffic Engineering, Economics, and Political Science. So, there you go. Whoever you ask in the army which faculty they finished, they all say 'Traffic, Traffic, Traffic'. Totally stupid.

This excerpt illustrates Lovro's impression that students at particular faculties manage to balance their army cadet responsibilities with their course responsibilities, and he relates this to characteristics of faculties rather than individual capability, with his institution not being one in

which such balancing is possible. A similar point is made by Melita (FG, MGO) when she talks about her work obligations:

There is no way a student from the EEC or a molecular biologist could have a job during their studies. And it's like that at most faculties that are strict about the Bologna way, there's no playing about there. You have to spend 3 to 4 hours per day next to a book and if you don't, you'll have to double that amount the following day and that's how it goes.

In other words, students recognize that on some courses it would not be possible to have a job, which has further implications for those students who find themselves at these departments with parallel employment responsibilities. Melita, who studies at MGO finds the balance between work and studying difficult. Although she lives at home with her parents, because she does not get along with her mother she decides to take on paid work, which directly influences her study progress. She says:

*Student life for me is like an evening course. I don't know. I work every day, at least it's been like that in the last five months, so you have to come in on time, you have responsibilities, there is a boss, you learn a particular type of behaviour. Work becomes part of everyday life. And since I've been working I have a feeling things have changed, that I no longer have the hang of things.... There are days when I don't have 10, 20 kunas, but I'd rather be hungry that day than take from my parents.*

Indeed, as a result of her job responsibilities, Melita did not enrol into her second year of study; financial concerns override the academic. According to Lynch and O'Riordan (1998), economic constraints are the primary barrier to progress.

The problem of working during one's studies was also mentioned by Ružica (SG, MGO) whose sister warns her that it is difficult to work and study at the same time. Similarly, Nino (SG, EEC) ends his part-time job when he sees that it is interfering with his course responsibilities and his parents tell him 'your studies come first'. Importantly, both these students have the choice not to work, whereas for the two students on the cadet programme and for Melita, such responsibilities are a necessity. According to questionnaire responses, 8.7 per cent of students indicated that they worked, which is significantly lower than figures from the UK context; according to Hutchings (2003), 'most surveys suggest that over 40 per cent of full-time students have jobs in term-time' (p.163).

Drawing on Melita's, Lovro's and Petar's interviews, it seems that the students most at risk of poor academic performance, in the context of economic capital, are those who cannot rely on family support for their studies. This seems particularly evident when such lack of financial support involves action on the part of the individual, such as employment or cadet responsibilities, and becomes aggravated in an academically demanding higher education setting. These results resonate with Cooke et al.'s (2004) study which found that students in part-time employment tend to experience a more difficult time at university.

The relationship between economic status and students' expectations regarding successful enrolment into their second year of study was also reinforced quantitatively. Spearman's rank order correlation was significant and positive ( $r(615)=.155$ ,  $p<.001$ ), suggesting that expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study increases with higher estimations of financial status. Table 7.1 illustrates how whereas 52.1 per cent of students who estimated their family's financial status as 'average' expected to enrol into the second year successfully, a higher percentage of those students estimating is as 'good' expected the same (64.2%).

Table 7.1 The distribution of students' estimation of financial status and their expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study.

			Expectation of successful enrolment into the second year.			
			No	I don't know	Yes	
Estimation of financial status.	Very bad	Count	1	2	2	5
		% within Estimation of financial status.	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Bad	Count	6	13	15	34
		% within Estimation of financial status.	17.6%	38.2%	44.1%	100.0%
	Average	Count	40	95	147	282
		% within Estimation of financial status.	14.2%	33.7%	52.1%	100.0%
	Good	Count	18	78	172	268
		% within Estimation of financial status.	6.7%	29.1%	64.2%	100.0%
	Very good	Count	1	8	17	26
		% within Estimation of financial status.	3.8%	30.8%	65.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	66	196	353	615
		% within Estimation of financial status.	10.7%	31.9%	57.4%	100.0%

### *Distinctions*

Whereas in the previous two sections the emphasis has been on the influence of economic capital in its objectified form on HE choices and experiences, this section discusses its embodied form, as identified by the interviewed students.

The Croatian students mentioned the following 'sign-vehicles', to borrow Goffman's (1959) term, or 'markers of class', to borrow Bourdieu's (1984), in relation to the (non)possession of economic capital: clothes and shoes, watches, mobiles, lap tops and cars. For example, according to Nino (SG, EEC), 'some people have Lacoste, others have normal tracksuits, someone has an I-don't-know-what-kind-of watch'; similarly, Fran (FG, FTB) says: 'you notice what people wear, what kind of mobile they have, Lacoste or something similar, shoes and stuff like that'. The Lacoste brand, as an expensive choice, is also mentioned by Mili (FG, MAT): 'I have heard that at the business department it is important to have Lacoste shoes, but I haven't noticed that here' and Melita (FG, MGO) mentions the choice of expensive shoes when she comments on the visual appearance of her colleagues:

Most of the people here dress alternatively, but there are those whose parents really have a lot of money, so you know, *they can dress up, get Paciotti shoes*, they don't care cause they have money.

The social marking of clothing was also recognised by Bourdieu (1984) who made a distinction between suits and blue overalls as socially distinct. In a similar vein, Andrej (SG, MGO) draws on car differences to illustrate distinctions rendered by differing levels of economic capital:

I think every society is like that, it's kind of natural... *a Mercedes on the road will attract more attention than a Zastava or a Fiat*...when a brutally expensive car passes everyone will look at it, the same when a girl passes or a guy with brutally expensive clothes and you can see that money is falling out of them because it costs 1000 euros. Everyone will look even if she's not beautiful.

Social differences are also mentioned by Katarina (FG, DES) who says 'we were told that one day, if we were designers, how much we will get paid will depend on whether we come in a BMW or an Opel Astra'.

Other such indicators of economic capital mentioned by the students included lap tops and leisure activities. With regard to the former, Damir (SG, MAT) says: 'At FER [EEC] you have a fine difference. A person without a lap top, a person with a cheap lap top, a person with an expensive lap top, and a person who has a lap top, a mobile, the whole range. Here at the Maths faculty you don't really have such "accessories".' With regard to leisure activities, Eli (SG, FTB) contends: 'you notice differences, some students who want to go out, but feel embarrassed to go because they don't have any money'. Tanja (SG, EEC) also notices that some of her male colleagues go out and spend a lot of money, whereas others cannot afford to do the same. Interestingly, she says that in this context it might be more difficult for men since they are expected to pay for girls' drinks. The impression Eli and Tanja have of the less privileged students is lived out by Petar (FG, EEC): 'ok, I go out too, but I can't...I don't have my own money, that's the problem. So I can't do everything they can'.

The selected student accounts illustrate how embodied economic capital can shape distinctions between students, as well as how non-possession of economic capital can be restraining. An interesting question connected to this is whether such distinctions have implications for students' experiences of belonging or non-belonging at their faculties, as suggested by a student quoted by Archer and Hutchings (2000) in the context of cultural capital: 'I just walk into the class-room with the Sun newspaper and people in the class used to have The Times...I had to leave, I

couldn't survive'. The Croatian students I interviewed mentioned instances of economically informed exclusionary practices. However, they also seemed to find their niche within the student body. For example, Fabijan, a medical student whose family is of 'average' economic status, notices other people's economically driven classifying schemes, based on visual appearance and transport. He says:

I don't know if it's accidental at our faculty or if you find it at others too, but I find that *people are being rated according to, I don't know, how you're dressed, how financially well off you are, and then they won't hang out with you...* or 'it's beneath me to come by bus, I'll come in my car'. I've noticed that and I can't believe that such people exist. Such thinking, maybe I'm wrong, but *it's just not normal for me*.

What is particularly illustrative in Fabijan's account is how lack of economic capital does not only exist objectively and independently from other forms of capital (e.g. not enough money to buy books), but also that economic capital (non)possession is experienced subjectively, creating distinctions and distance between people which can influence social capital (exemplifying the convertibility of different types of capital as noted by Bourdieu, e.g. 1977). In other words, (non)possession of economic capital does not only exist 'individually' (both nominally in the amount of resources available, as well as the practices it tends to influence), but also 'relationally' through distinctions (influencing one's social awareness and prospects of accumulating other forms of capital). However, although Fabijan notices such classificatory judgments operating, and he recognises that he is one of the people being classified in such a way, he still talks about the majority of his colleagues in an amicable manner.

Experiences of feeling like 'a fish out of water' on economic grounds was not prominent in the conducted interviews; however, two students suggested private HE institutions were spaces where students who were of lower economic status might feel excluded. For example, Filip (SG, MAT) says that he would not want to go to a particular private professional HE institution because the people who are there have too much money and 'they acquired it too easily'. Similarly, Nino (SG, EEC) describes students at another private institution as 'idiots...they only go out with such [rich] people. But it's not like that here'. In other words, it seems that whereas private HE institutions are recognized as having a distinct economic majority that could be expected to have a negative influence on the experiences of (non)belonging for the less privileged, the same is not as evident at the case study public faculties.

The only exception to this observation is the case of Katarina, a first generation student at DES who estimated her family's income as 'average'. Although 'average' family income does not suggest financial difficulties as 'bad' or 'very bad' estimations might, the weight of family income seems to take on different meanings at different faculties. That is, judging by student interviews, the course at DES is the most expensive one since students are expected to pay for project materials. In addition, Katarina is a fee-paying student who does not come from Zagreb so her family also needs to cover different costs external to the institution. Katarina describes her colleagues as follows:

*It looks as if these people have money. I look at second and third year students and I find it strange. I guess their parents have a lot of money... what else can one conclude when they can afford so many things....they wear 'fancy' clothes....and the street where the faculty is...there is a poster that has been put up by Highclub [shop] that says 'snobbish, so what?'...I don't know where they get the money for all that...I had a phase at the beginning of the semester...I lost my, how should I put it, way of dressing and then I said to myself, no way, I'm going back to how I used to be, I don't want to lose myself.*

In her interview Katarina described the students at her faculty as rich and 'snobbish'. At the beginning of the semester she tries to 'fit in' by changing her style of dressing, but she does not feel comfortable with the change and reverts back to her own style in an effort not to 'lose' herself. This issue of 'change' for students from working class backgrounds is also identified by Archer and Leathwood (2003). Their respondents framed change largely in terms of taste and the authors reported examples of both identity change and resistance to it. In Katarina's case, there is initial conformism to the majority with regard to visual appearance, but she then resists change. Institutionally, the small size of the student body seems to aggravate this sense of difference since it makes it more difficult for Katarina to find people who are similar to her. However, she does have two friends who also 'walk around in torn jeans', i.e. people she can relate to. Figure 7.1 shows the poster Katarina mentioned in her interview and which she said was representative of her impression of the faculty. The poster was put up as an advertisement for a shop next to the School of Design.



Figure 7.1 Poster in the corridor leading to the School of Design.

Katarina's case illustrates an individual's framing of non-belonging in relation to the social make-up of their colleagues as an aspect of institutional habitus. However, Katarina was the only interviewed student who reported such an 'alienating' experience.

The aim of this chapter has been to discuss how differing levels of economic capital shape HE choices and experiences. On the basis of the conducted interviews, it was argued that students who come from economically less privileged backgrounds are more likely than their financially more privileged counterparts to experience restrictions in relation to course choice and progress. More specifically, in comparison to the financially more privileged student who has the luxury of choosing his or her course solely on academic grounds and who can afford to pay tuition fees, buy books and not worry about living arrangements, poorer students have to consider length of potential course, as well as course expenses, and they are more likely to experience financial struggles, particularly if they live away from home. Such financial struggles led certain students to undertake employment or military obligations, which negatively interfered with their course progress. In addition, institutional practices, such as admission procedures and faculty equipment, as well as time required for the course, were flagged as contributing to the gravity of such economic discrepancies. Lack of a student loan culture and insufficient scholarships were also identified as an unfavourable circumstance for students who cannot be financially supported by their parents. Finally, it was acknowledged that economic capital exists not only objectively but is also embodied and externalized through different 'sign vehicles' which shape distinctions between students.

The previous chapter noted a distinction between the financial concerns of students living at home, as opposed to those living away during their studies. This chapter further explores the role of residential status in the university choices and experiences of the Croatian students interviewed. In an article on student experiences and residential transitions at selected English universities, Holdsworth (2006) noted a difference between the university experiences of students who live in their parental home during their studies and those who live away. The latter model was identified as the more favourable since it 'gives young people more freedom and opportunity to socialise and be part of the student scene' (p.514). Indeed, according to Holdsworth, residential status is 'a key demarcating factor in how successfully students feel they adapt to being at university' (2006, p.495); local based students tend to face additional barriers to overcome in their university experience, related to orientation to university life and assumptions made by other students. Importantly, her research suggests that local students are more likely to come from less socio-economically privileged backgrounds.

Unlike in Holdsworth's study, the findings in this research suggest that, where possible, students are more likely to choose to live at home with their parents over living away for the duration of their study, irrespective of socio-economic background. It is argued in the chapter that this might be due to the tendency of most students interviewed to construct HE participation as an academic rather than social experience. In addition, the Croatian interviewees do not appear to attribute an 'authentic' student experience to any particular residential status, which contrasts with research in the UK context (e.g. Holdsworth 2009, 2006, Christie 2007). Furthermore, although general differences were identified in the experiences of those staying at home and living away, nuances were also observed within the 'living away' category between those students who were in student accommodation as opposed to those in private accommodation. Students in university accommodation tended to report a richer social life, but private accommodation was portrayed as more conducive to one's studies. In the 'living away' category, type of living arrangement was identified as associated with students' financial capabilities. Finally, a distinction is made in the chapter between, on the one hand, the private spaces students occupy and on the other, the public spaces the students are exposed to as they move between the private space of their home and the institutional space of their faculty; the experience of such public spaces was identified by certain students as contributing to their overall university experience.

According to Holdsworth (2009), what is apparent in both academic and popular accounts of student transitions in the UK is how the meanings associated with mobility for the purposes of HE suggest advantages for students who move compared to those who do not. Indeed, she suggests that the students in her sample constructed living away during their course as the more superior model of HE participation and it is therefore not surprising that, finance permitting, many students in the UK choose to live away from home during their studies; existing survey data suggest that just under a quarter of undergraduate students in England and Wales live with their parents (Callender and Wilkinson 2003) and importantly, according to Christie (2007), these students are more likely to be first generation students.

In Croatia, in contrast, 44.2 per cent of the students who completed the questionnaire reported they lived in their family home<sup>36</sup>. Interestingly, these results are similar to the data collected by Magdalenic et al. (1991) in the late 1980s at the University of Zagreb. That is, 49.8 per cent of the students in their study indicated they lived in their family home. This suggests that there has not been any significant change in students' residential status, with regard to living at home, over a twenty year period.

In this study, of the total number of students who reported living at home, 46.5 per cent estimated their family's income as 'good' and 5.8 per cent as 'very good', which suggests that choice of living at home during one's studies is not just financially motivated, as was suggested by Holdsworth's interviewees. In relation to this, the Croatian students interviewed constructed the choice of staying at home during one's studies as positive rather than negative. In fact, the assumption was that one would stay at home if one had the opportunity, rather than leave. The following selected extracts illustrate this:

(1) Well, I'm here in Zagreb, *I was born here and live here.* (Nino, SG, EEC)

(2) I went to Zagreb because *it was closer* and better quality. (Fran, FG, FTB)

(3) *I also live nearby. I need five minutes to the faculty. I wouldn't study anywhere else. It wouldn't be emotionally or financially useful.* (Danijela, SG, MED)

---

<sup>36</sup> 23.5 per cent of students reported renting a flat, 16.8 per cent live in student dorms, 11.8 per cent in their own flat, 2.7 per cent with relatives, whereas 1.1 per cent marked that they lived in a different type of accommodation from the ones offered; the latter included, for example, army barracks for students who enrolled as part of the Ministry of Defence cadet programme.

(4) *It's the nearest to X.* I mean at first I didn't even want to go away to Zagreb, let alone go to Y or Z. I mean I am very close to my family, especially my mum, and I have so many friends in X... *it's primarily because of my family and the people I love.* (Matilda, FG, EEC)

Unlike Holdsworth's (2006) interviewees, for whom living at home was a financial necessity rather than a preferred option, the Croatian interviewees generally suggested the reverse. For example, in the above excerpts both Danijela and Nino estimate their family's financial status as 'good'. Indeed, living in or near the family home during one's studies was the more favoured model for those with the opportunity to do so, while for those living away, the transition to HE involved leaving their comfort zone. Tea, a second generation medical student, said the following about living away from home:

*My lifestyle has changed. It's not like my mum is waiting at home with dinner for me, I have to worry about paying the rent, paying the bills. It's difficult to make this cut from secondary school to faculty. But you learn responsibility, strength, stability. It's different when you know that you have your parents to rely on when you're at home, and different when you have a neighbour or a flat mate and things are as you make them yourself. It's a good school, preparation, but a bit tiring. Maybe parents should make those still living at home more independent and force them to make their own decisions. But the good thing is you always have a cooked meal, you're at home, you don't have to go through the getting used to part, so it's partly good and partly not.*

For Tea, the process of getting used to the HE experience involves a wide-ranging lifestyle change where her concerns are no longer just educational but also domestic, and this can be 'a bit tiring'. She claims that 'the good thing about being at home is that it's easier to deal with changes at home rather than somewhere else'. Fabijan's (FG, MED) interview echoes this: 'there's no more mum cooking, mum washing, I study for two hours and then I have lunch and my mum has put everything on the table...now I need to think about whether the bill has arrived, whether I have paid it, when I will eat, whether I've bought bread and stuff like that.' Like Tea and Fabijan, Ružica (SG, MGO) has also moved to Zagreb to study and this has included significant changes to her life.

Ružica: Well, *my entire life has changed. I left my town, my parents, I came to a whole new place with new people.* Everything was new to me, absolutely everything. And I came here alone because none of my friends from X came here, so everything was new.

K: How do you feel about this change?

Ružica: *I like it.* I like that I have *become independent*, that I live without my parents, how I know that if I don't wash my clothes no one else will. I have a feeling that I am *more mature* than some other people, they stay at home on their own for a few days and they say 'oh no, I have to wash my own clothes, cook' and I just look at them and think 'what's your problem'?

K: Why do you think some people decide to stay at home with their parents?

Ružica: I guess it's *easier for them*. *'My mum's here. I won't miss anything.'* Just like secondary school. Life will be easy. I don't know. Sooner or later they'll have to move away from their parents. I mean, I don't want to be living with my parents at the age of 30, having my mum cooking for me and washing my clothes.

What Tea's and Ružica's examples illustrate in particular is how, on the one hand, moving away from home is constructed as an empowering experience but, on the other, living at home with your family (under the assumption you get along with them) can make life easy. The latter point was also raised in Nino's (SG, EEC) interview; he says: 'I don't have to do anything at home, I mean I help but I have parents who...my mum...it's easier for me'<sup>37</sup>. In a sense, there is recognition of a tension between independence as empowering yet effortful and dependence as disempowering yet effortless.

In comparison to students living away from home during their studies, for whom the university experience involves wide-ranging changes, the students who come from Zagreb and its surrounding areas experience a change in the physical location of their formal education but not the location of their private space. As a result, such students often described HE as an extension of secondary school. For example, Mladen (SG), a medical student who lives at home with his parents said:

K: Has your life changed since secondary school?

Mladen: It hasn't really. *In principle it's the same, I just study more.* There's time to go for a coffee and go out, but you need to organize your time well. You really learn a lot more than before, especially for the big exams, like Anatomy. You need 10 hours a day for that, which I couldn't even conceive of in secondary school. In secondary school it was maybe 5 hours all week and here it's 10, 12 hours each day.

---

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, in most students' interviews the role of the mother figures prominently with regard to household chores. These examples suggest the central role women continue to have in Croatia with regard to household responsibilities.

Also, according to Sonja (SG, MAT), 'we who live in Zagreb don't need to lose time to go home every weekend, we don't have to travel there, eat in student restaurants. I come home, eat the meal my mum has prepared...I think it's more difficult for them'. This resonates with how the university staff in Holdsworth's (2006) research talked about some of the local students at their universities using the phrase 'they just changed the bus route' (p.509) on a couple of occasions to indicate that, for these students, HE was not very different from going to college or school.

The responses of the Croatian students interviewed differ from those of Holdsworth with regard to the relationship between adapting to university life and residential status. For Holdsworth's respondents, living away from home makes the adaptation process easier since the social aspects of university life, deemed as important, are closely linked to campus life; the Croatian students, on the other hand, do not seem to attribute an 'authentic' student experience to any particular residential status. This resonates with Holdsworth's (2006) claim that the link between going to university and leaving home is much weaker in continental Europe; also, according to Christie (2007), there is no prominent stigma attached to home-based students in the USA. In other words, mobility for HE purposes seems to be differently culturally evaluated in different HE contexts. When I told one of the Croatian students interviewed how it was quite common in the UK to live away from home during one's studies, she said: 'I think that in England they yearn to accomplish a lot as soon as possible...and they suppress this kind of family atmosphere...whereas, I think that in Croatia family matters, it gives you a sense of security, you have someone to rely on'. Tea's interview extract captures what Ferrera (1996) refers to as 'southern familialism'; i.e. family life characterised by 'high solidarity' as identified in countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Although such strong family ties are constructed as positive in relation to the support provided to family members, the author also says that 'the other side of the "high solidarity coin" of southern familialism is the high burden falling on women's shoulders' (p.35). In the conducted interviews the 'high solidarity' aspect of family life in Croatia was mentioned by students, as was the role of mothers in domestic life. This prominent role of mothers could also be related to Reay's (2005) observation of 'women still taking responsibility for the majority of emotional involvement and emotional management' (p.65).

Holdsworth does not discuss whether there are differences between different groups of young people with regard to their constructions of HE. Hutchings and Archer (2001), on the other hand, mention Ozga and Sukhnandan's (1997) research which found that conventional applicants (young A level) anticipate minimal academic demands and an exciting social life, whereas non-

conventional applicants emphasize the workload. The Croatian students interviewed placed the focus of their university experience primarily on its academic rather than social aspects. As a result, living in one's family home tends to be identified as making the adaptation process easier since it does not involve wider lifestyle changes and family support is perceived as enabling a focus on the academic aspects of HE.

For Croatian students living away from home, their accommodation, ranging from the most 'elite' – living in a flat of one's own – to 'free' accommodation in army barracks, depends on their financial means. The results of the Kruskal Wallis test suggest that students' living arrangements differ significantly with their estimation of family's financial status: ( $\chi^2(5, N = 622) = 22.557$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Frequencies (see Table 8.1) show that the majority of students (57.3%) who live in their own flat estimated their family's financial status as 'good', whereas the majority of students in student accommodation or those renting estimated it as 'average' (54.9% and 53.7% respectively). This result is to be expected since there is no student loan culture in Croatia and the scholarship amount is insufficient, so students' choice of living arrangement outside the family home largely depends on their family's financial support. In this respect, the possibility of having student accommodation is crucial for students who come from poorer backgrounds, yet an OECD (2006) review of tertiary education in Croatia concludes that 'the number of student dormitories and the accommodation capacities of the public sector are not meeting student demand' (p.78). Indeed, only 8 per cent of students obtain student accommodation and rooms are allocated primarily according to study performance.

Table 8.1 Distribution of living arrangements according to estimated financial status.

			Estimation of financial status.					Total
			Very bad	Bad	Average	Good	Very good	
Current living arrangement.	Family home	Count	2	15	114	128	16	275
		% within Current living arrangement.	.7%	5.5%	41.5%	46.5%	5.8%	100.0%
	Own flat	Count	0	3	24	43	5	75
		% within Current living arrangement.	.0%	4.0%	32.0%	57.3%	6.7%	100.0%
	With relatives	Count	0	2	8	6	0	16
		% within Current living arrangement.	.0%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Renting	Count	2	5	79	57	4	147
		% within Current living arrangement.	1.4%	3.4%	53.7%	38.8%	2.7%	100.0%
	Student accommodation	Count	1	10	56	34	1	102
		% within Current living arrangement.	1.0%	9.8%	54.9%	33.3%	1.0%	100.0%
	Other	Count	0	0	4	3	0	7
		% within Current living arrangement.	.0%	.0%	57.1%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	5	35	285	271	26	622
		% within Current living arrangement.	.8%	5.6%	45.8%	43.6%	4.2%	100.0%

The student interviews suggested that these accommodation arrangements could affect study practices. For example, student accommodation usually involves sharing a room with one other person. When I asked Tea (SG, MED), who rents a flat with a friend, whether she had tried to get a room in student dorms, she said: ‘...I wouldn’t really like to be in a student dorm. I’m not the type who can focus if someone else is in the room. But if I do get a room this year, then I’ll take it. I guess I’ve found my way around now, I have friends who are also med students, so maybe I can be with them.’ Tea’s extract illustrates her focus on the academic aspects of the university experience and she will apply for student accommodation only because of financial reasons. For Mili (FG, MAT), moving into student dorms was difficult at first. She says: ‘It was difficult to get used to. We share bathrooms, the rooms are small, I have a roommate. But now it’s ok’. Lovro (FG, FTB), who had spent his first university year in army barracks describes the accommodation experience as follows: ‘someone always comes into your room, asks you how you are, what you’re doing. Stays around for an hour or two and as if they care that you have a book open on your table. But now I have my own room, so it’s easier.’ Here we can again see how the academic overrides the social, and the importance of having a room of one’s own where there are no distractions was often repeated in the interviews. A further example of this is Fabijan’s (FG, MED) explanation of why he is renting a flat:

I wanted my peace. *I wanted to be alone, primarily because of studying, so that I could organize myself.* I didn't want to ask for a dorm room, firstly I don't even know whether I would get it, maybe I would, though I don't have any extra points. But *I wanted my peace, my flat, not having to share a room with anyone.* And I have to say I am satisfied. Because I have the peace I need to study, and when I want to go out you always find someone.

In this private spatial context, it seems important to have one's own space for learning free from interferences; however, a problem with this is that student accommodation seems to suffer the highest risk of interference, yet it is also the cheapest option. In other words, academically, and in the context of private spaces, the least privileged individuals are those who have interference-laden private spaces.

Satisfaction with one's living conditions according to living arrangement was also examined with the results from the students' questionnaire responses. In general, the majority of students seem to be 'mostly' or 'extremely' satisfied with their living conditions (92.6%). However, according to the Kruskal Wallis test, there is a statistically significant difference between types of living arrangement with regard to student satisfaction with their living conditions ( $\chi^2(5, N = 622) = 87.070, p < .001$ ). Frequency counts (see Table 8.2) show that a significantly higher percentage of students living in their family home or their own flat are 'extremely satisfied' with their living conditions (53.8% and 68% respectively), in comparison to only 14 per cent of students living in student accommodation who reported the same. However, although these differences can be observed, it is important to recognize that the majority of students (72.9%) in student accommodation reported they were 'mostly satisfied' with their living conditions.

Table 8.2 Students' reported satisfaction with their living conditions according to current living arrangement.

			Satisfaction with living conditions				Total
			Not at all satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Extremely satisfied	
Current living arrangement	Family home	Count	1	10	118	150	279
		% within Living arrangement current	.4%	3.6%	42.3%	53.8%	100.0%
	Own flat	Count	0	2	22	51	75
		% within Living arrangement current	.0%	2.7%	29.3%	68.0%	100.0%
	With relatives	Count	0	2	8	7	17
		% within Living arrangement current	.0%	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	100.0%
	Renting	Count	4	14	90	41	149
		% within Living arrangement current	2.7%	9.4%	60.4%	27.5%	100.0%
	Student accommodation	Count	2	12	78	15	107
		% within Living arrangement current	1.9%	11.2%	72.9%	14.0%	100.0%
	Other	Count	0	0	3	3	6
		% within Living arrangement current	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	40	319	267	633
		% within Living arrangement current	1.1%	6.3%	50.4%	42.2%	100.0%

Although students recognized the value of having one's own private space for study purposes, the questionnaire results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in expectation of successfully enrolling into the second year of study according to either satisfaction with one's living conditions ( $\chi^2(3, N = 627) = 3.395, p=.335$ ) or one's type of living arrangement ( $\chi^2(5, N = 630) = 6.552, p=.256$ ).

Finally, general differences can be identified between students living in student accommodation and the others with regard to their social lives. For example, the former meet more students studying at different courses. Mili's (FG, MAT) experience in student accommodation is that:

*I have some friends from my faculty who live in rented flats. My experience is different because there are more people here, more students, they talk about what it's like for them at their faculties. The social life is better...whereas others, they come to the flat and they possibly have just a roommate.*

Similarly, according to Andrej (SG, MGO), 'we were all connected. We found reasons to get together, barbecue. I think *we may have hung out too much*, I mean it's never too much, but *maybe we neglected our faculties*, although a lot of them managed to do well, but there are a few of us who didn't'. Mili's and Andrej's excerpts illustrate a rich social life in student accommodation; however, Andrej's example also indicates the possibility of such socialising overriding the academic concerns of university study.

### *Change of atmosphere*

What has been illustrated so far is that the transition to HE for students living away from home involves a challenging replacement of familial and familiar private spaces with unfamiliar ones. It was suggested that this transition has an influence on HE experiences since it involves a wide-ranging lifestyle change not shared by those who live at home with their families. However, judging by the interviews with students who are not from Zagreb (39 per cent of students who filled in the questionnaire come from Zagreb, whereas 26.3 per cent from a smaller town, 16.5 per cent from another city, 16 per cent from a village and 2.2 per cent from abroad)<sup>38</sup>, it is not just private spaces that require getting used to. According to Wiborg (2004) 'the relationship and the degree of attachment young people have to their local community remains an under-researched aspect of youth migration' (p.416).

In this research study, fifteen out of the twenty eight interviewed students had moved to Zagreb for study purposes and many of them talked about how they experienced the new public spaces that surround them. Here are three selected illustrations:

(1) Tea (SG, MED): *I go home whenever I can. I go home because I am from a village, and Zagreb has a totally different atmosphere for me. These heat waves are killing me. And when I come home I settle in my room. It is after all my home.*

(2) Bartol (SG, DES): *I've grown up in a different atmosphere than they have. They're all city kids, and I've grown up in X, which was a village, there weren't even cars...and I learned to be relaxed...and now when all of this has started I have to think two hours in advance...and by the time I get to the faculty I'm already crazy and they're all relaxed. They're used to the city and the craziness, the crowds...but you get used to it. I think you get used to it within a year.*

---

<sup>38</sup> The reported results are similar to the findings of Ilišin (2008). On a sample of 325 students at the University of Zagreb, 41.8 per cent indicated their permanent residence in Zagreb, 26.2 per cent a smaller town, 25 per cent a village and 7.7 per cent a large city.

(3) Lovro (FG, FTB): I don't like Zagreb. *X is beautiful for me, nature and there are no noisy cars. When I used to go to Zagreb before my studies, I would get back home and I would have a splitting headache. And I would immediately have two painkillers and go to sleep. It would kill me. And then when I used to sleep at the camp in Črnomerec [part of Zagreb] I could hear the tram and that would kill me. Really, it would kill me. Awful. Ok, I guess I'm used to it all now.*

These interview extracts take us out of the enclosed spaces of homes into open public spaces which bear rural-urban markings and influence how students experience their surroundings. Similarly to Wiborg's (2004) HE students from rural areas in Norway who talked about nature as an attractive aspect of rural life, the quoted Croatian students portray hierarchical rural/urban images where rural spaces are constructed as idyllic (there are no heat waves and it is quiet) in opposition to the heated city, where cars and trams contribute to the deafening noise which results in headaches. According to Mili (FG, MAT), 'everything is so fast in Zagreb. My friend recently visited me in Zagreb and she said everyone is in a hurry here, while at home it's slower, the life tempo is slower. The air is different'. This idyllic representation of rural life echoes Wiborg's (2004) mention of Paerregaard's (1997) 'nostalgic' categorization of rural areas which resulted from his study of migrants from Andean rural villages to Lima. Paerrgaard made a distinction between 'rational/negative' and 'nostalgic' conceptions of rural spaces where the former is characterized by 'an image of the village as undeveloped with ignorant people far from modern society' and the latter as 'the rural village as a picturesque setting unspoilt by modern society's negative influence' (Wiborg 2004, p.427). All of the Croatian students interviewed from rural areas could be classified in the 'nostalgic' category. One of these students, Lana (FG), took the following two photographs of 'home'.



Figure 8.1 Lana's photograph of home.



Figure 8.2 Lana's photograph of home.

The extracts also illustrate how these students still feel 'home' as the familial home, and they tend to go 'home' as often as possible. Although they have changed their physical location for study purposes, they seem to occupy the new location only partially. To borrow Bauman's (2004) phrase, they find themselves 'betwixt and between' places, but hint at the possibility of 'getting used' to the new place. This parallel existence of physical closeness and mental distance to and from the newly occupied public space also vividly came across in an interview with Katarina (FG, DES). Unlike with the above mentioned students who raised the rural-urban spatial distinction, Katarina talks about coastal-inland differences. She says:

You wake up here and there's always the trams and *noise*. At home, a view of the sea. And I look at people from Zagreb and it's a *whole new way of thinking* for me. Down in X, *we're just different*. Really we are. We are *more open and free* and I don't know. *We just function differently to you guys*. And I find that shocking.

Katarina captures the 'view of the sea' in one of the photographs she took (see Figure 8.3).



Figure 8.3 Katarina's photograph of the coast.

Here Katarina echoes her colleagues quoted above in noticing the physical distinctions between her home town and Zagreb, such as noise level; however, she also identifies a different mindset of the people living in Zagreb. This is similar to Matilda's (FG, EEC) impression that 'people will look at a joke here differently than they will in X. People understand a joke there, here you have to explain, even distance yourself a bit...not everyone has the same mentality'. Although this can be interpreted as a communication barrier, it can also be read as an opportunity for students to learn about differences. Like most of the other students interviewed who come from areas outside of Zagreb, Katarina also takes every opportunity to go home:

In the first semester *I went home every weekend, every weekend. Every weekend because otherwise I would have gone insane*, I wouldn't be able to do anything. Lately, I haven't been that often because I have these tests and things happening on Saturday's, so I couldn't go that much. But I am going this weekend after three weeks and I can't wait, I just can't wait. They tell me that people are swimming down there.

A vivid illustration of Katarina's feeling of not belonging in Zagreb is a photograph she took of herself at home (see Figure 8.4), with the sea in the background. She entitled the photograph 'Me, where I belong'.



Figure 8.4 'Me, where I belong'

However, not all of the students interviewed constructed city life negatively. Indeed, unlike Katarina, who comes from a large city on the coast, Ružica (SG, MGO) is happy to have left the small coastal town where she grew up. She said:

I know a lot of people who tried to get in and who didn't manage to enrol into any course, so they stayed in Y. And I went to Y recently for my birthday and these people are going crazy, 'I'm going to go crazy, there is no life here'. *Because either they can't get a job and their friends have left and then what do they do down there, nothing.* Their mothers are hanging over them saying do something with your life and they are all complaining. Whoever has stayed behind is complaining.

For Ružica, going to a big city was the right decision and she enjoys the social opportunities and independence it brings. Although the selection of extracts might suggest that it is more difficult for first rather than second generation students to adapt to the new environment, overall this adaptation appears to be a widespread response to going to university in a different place. Indeed, there are examples of both first and second generation students living away experiencing their new surroundings both positively and negatively.

To conclude, reviewed literature on HE participation often confines its framing of 'belonging' and 'not belonging' to the corridors of the particular HE institution examined, overlooking the wider space the institution occupies and the impact this may have on HE experiences (both positive and negative). An example of this is Bourdieu's exclusive attribution in *The Inheritors* (1979) of students' feeling 'at home' or 'out of place' in terms of their socially conditioned habitus and how it reacts to a HE setting. Indeed, space-wise, although ultimately the immediate HE context tends to shape student experiences, the above discussion of private and public spaces draws attention to the emotional charge connected to students occupying other spaces which could arguably influence the overall HE experience. For example, adapting to the HE experience seems to be easier for students who stay at home as opposed to those who move away for study purposes. Furthermore, there is an implicit assumption in participation literature that students coming from the country where they have enrolled into their HE course are not at risk of experiencing a culture shock when moving from one part of the country to another. What this section has attempted to illustrate is that feelings of 'belonging' and 'not belonging' are not only located in educational buildings, but are also shaped by the physical space surrounding them. The culture shocks are not only cross-cultural, but also intra-cultural. Katarina points to this when she says: 'It's like I have come into a different country, some other culture.'

## CHAPTER 9

### THE PLAYING FIELDS

In this study, the main 'players' are full-time first year undergraduate students who have differing volumes and types of capital and occupy multiple, educationally relevant 'fields'. The delineation of these fields has been empirically driven and, as a result, three main interrelated, yet separate fields have been identified as shaping student choices and experiences: the labour market field (field of the future), HE field (field of the present) and secondary education field (field of the past). Such identification of fields fits Bourdieu's understanding of the concept as encompassing an array of different 'locations', since the prerequisite for its framing is that relations of domination and subordination can be observed as a result of the (mis)recognition of capital (non)possession. Crucially, for Bourdieu 'the question of the limits of the field is a very difficult one, if only because it is *always at stake in the field itself* and therefore admits no *a priori* answer' (1992, p.100). Therefore, the workings of the field can be observed at both a macro and micro level, i.e. a field can be the university, the totality of disciplines, or the faculty of human sciences (Bourdieu, 1992). Similarly, Reay et al. (2005) mention Bourdieu's concept of the field as referring to both more narrow concerns, such as a classroom or workplace, and more abstract ones, such as a field of politics or the legal field. Such a broad understanding of 'field' seems to undermine Hodgkinson's (1999) contribution to the discussion of habitus and field: Hodgkinson adds a macro context to Bourdieu's interrelationship between habitus and field which he cites as being social, political, economic, cultural, geographical and historical and which impacts the field as well as habitus. However, Bourdieu's 'broad' understanding of field seems to accommodate these contexts, i.e. Hodgkinson's macro context is arguably already subsumed under Bourdieu's concept of field or, more accurately, his recognition of intersecting fields.

This chapter focuses on the interrelationship between the HE and labour market fields. Firstly, it identifies a labour market effect with regard to students' decisions to continue to HE and to choose particular university courses. Secondly, it illustrates how the symbolic capital attributed to the University of Zagreb, also shaped by the labour market, contributes to this university's position as the dominant 'player' in the HE field. And finally, the chapter discusses identified gender dynamics both in the labour market and HE fields and the effect this can have on various educational pathways.

The labour market is a field of the future for most of the interviewed students, and they engage with it only virtually through their perception of the interconnectedness between job opportunities and educational qualifications. When asked why they had continued to HE, many of the students' responses suggested that they recognize a struggle over job positions in the labour market, where an HE qualification becomes a form of institutionalized cultural capital since it helps with employment and promotion. Selected extracts illustrate this: 'With secondary schooling, a grammar school, I have no opportunities to get a job' (Tea, SG, MED); 'I couldn't do anything with just a completed classical grammar school' (Željka, SG, DES); 'Greater chances of getting a promotion within a company' (Nino, SG, EEC); 'Why don't you try to get a job without a profession, i.e. with just a grammar school qualification' (Filip, SG, MAT); 'Even with a higher education degree you are a nobody today, let alone without one' (Melita, FG, MGO).

This employability motivation to continue to HE was also examined in the student questionnaire. Students were asked to select three reasons why they had decided to continue to HE among the following options: my family wanted me to, most of my friends continued to HE, a degree will increase my chances of employment, a degree will give me high status in society, I want to continue developing my intellectual capabilities, I didn't know what else to do and I wanted to get student rights (e.g. healthcare). 87.2 per cent of students indicated the employment option, followed by the intellectual capabilities option with 74.8 per cent<sup>39</sup>. Students were also asked to choose three reasons why they decided to enrol into their own course specifically and here they had the following options: my family wanted me to, my friends enrolled into this course, increased employment opportunities, interest in the course, because I think completing this course will give me high status in society, I didn't know what else to study and this course will prepare me for my future job. Here, the intrinsic motivation indicator 'interest in course content' was indicated by the majority of students (79.3%), followed by increased employment opportunities with 65.6 per cent and then the 'preparation for future job' option with 45.2 per cent<sup>40</sup>. In other words, for the majority of students perceived employment opportunities and course interest contributed to their decision to continue to HE and study a particular course. Such findings conform to Rhodes and Nevill's (2004) research with first year undergraduate students in England. The authors report that their sample emphasized knowledge acquisition and

---

<sup>39</sup> 39.4 per cent indicated the 'high status' option, 12.1 per cent 'family', 11.7 per cent 'didn't know what else to do', 9.2 per cent 'friends' and 7.3 per cent 'student rights'.

<sup>40</sup> 24.9 per cent indicated the 'high status' option, 17.9 per cent 'didn't know what else to study', 11.2 per cent 'family' and 9.2 per cent 'friends'.

empowerment in the job market as being factors that make them feel good about attending university (p.184). The findings also resemble Connor's (2001) research, as quoted by Cooke et al. (2004), which showed that students listed an interest in the subject and a belief that gaining a degree would lead to a better job as the main reasons for attending university. Similarly, Ilišin (2008) observes that with a higher number of graduates in the labour market, the motivation to continue to HE becomes significantly related to being competitive in the employment sector rather than to social prestige.

In the conducted interviews there was a sense that students at EEC and MGO were more employment motivated, whereas students at MED and DES were more driven by their interest in the course. Four selected interview excerpts from students at the EEC and MGO illustrate this: '400 to 600 students leave this faculty every year but the demand is for 4000. That's one of the main reasons I chose FER [EEC] – employment. I was also advised [career advisor] on...mechanical engineering...but then we both decided it was a difficult course and a smaller salary, less chance of employment, so I gave up on that idea' (Jelena, FG, EEC); 'everyone says you've got a guaranteed job...I went for where it would be easiest to get a job...' (Nino, SG, EEC); 'I think you can find a really good job...there are some faculties where you complete a programme and it's like you haven't completed anything' (Andrej, SG, MGO); 'there are a lot of people at this faculty who are here because of job opportunities...because of the money' (Ružica, SG, MGO). Such extracts reinforce Mateju and Strakova's (2005) claim, based on OECD data, that students recognize the economic returns to HE. It also illustrates James's (1998) observation that these two fields (labour market and HE) 'continually try to appropriate and accommodate one another's interests' (p.106).

At DES, on the other hand, students said: 'I wanted something creative' (Željka, SG, DES) and 'I am always driven by what I love, what I want and what makes me happy' (Katarina, FG, DES). The interest dimension was also prominent at MED. For example: 'I'm interested in molecular biology and working in a research institute...I'm interested in cancer research' (Danijela, SG, MED); 'I want to help people...that's my priority' (Fabijan, FG, MED). These observed differences between the faculties can also be quantitatively confirmed. Whereas 80 per cent of students at EEC and 69.1 per cent at MGO indicated the employment option in the questionnaire, only 36.4 per cent did the same at DES and 52.4 per cent at MED. On the other hand, whereas 90.9 per cent of students at both DES and MED indicated the 'course interest' option, the same was reported by 71.3 per cent of students at the EEC and 66.7 per cent at the

MGO. In other words, although employment opportunities seem to be important for the overall student body, distinctions can be noticed between individual faculties. These findings resonate with Supek's (1969) research which identified differences in reasons for choosing a particular course of study between students at different faculties. The highest percentage of students who chose their course of study for interest reasons were students studying medicine, pharmacy and dentistry, whereas the lowest were students studying agriculture and forestry.

In this study, with regard to MAT and FTB, at the former a higher percentage of students marked the 'employment' option (77.9% employment, 76.6% course interest), whereas at the latter a higher percentage marked the 'course interest' option (81%, employment 60.7%). Boyle et al. (2002) suggest that the course interest option is more favourable since motivation linked to employment can make the student 'fixated on the qualification rather than the learning' (p.8).

According to Connor et al. (1999, as cited by Archer 2003b), there is a gender dimension to students' motivation to study. The authors argue that women are more likely to focus on subject interests, whereas men cite financial and employment reasons. Such a gender distinction could also be observed in this study. The output of the Mann Whitney test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female students with regard to their motivation to study a particular course (friends' influence:  $U = 45990.0$ ,  $z = -3.156$ ,  $p = .002$ ; increased employment opportunities:  $U = 45575.0$ ,  $z = -2.141$ ,  $p = .032$ ; interest in course content:  $U = 44545.0$ ,  $z = -3.140$ ,  $p = .002$ ; high social status:  $U = 44800.0$ ,  $z = -2.811$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Frequency counts show that out of a total 58 students who indicated their friends had influenced their choice of course, 69 per cent were male. In addition, out of 413 students who reported employment opportunities as motivation to study, 52.3 per cent were male. A higher percentage of male students also indicated the 'high social status' option (59% out of 156 students). On the other hand, a higher percentage of female students indicated they were motivated by course interest (54% out of 498 students). These results also resonate with Leathwood and O'Connell's (2003) questionnaire findings: women were more likely to stress their interest in the subject as a major motivating factor, whereas men more often emphasised financial or career motives.

The jobs that students talked about in their interviews and are expecting to have are 'good jobs'. For example, Melita (FG, MGO) says:

I know a lot of people who said they didn't want to study, "I am getting a job, I don't want to study at all", but it will be difficult for these people. I take myself as an example, in a year, a year

and a half, maybe even before, maybe later, they'll realise how difficult it is to, as people would say to "slave away" in bars, warehouses, shops...*you break your back to earn some cash and then you realise that you will be bankrupt for the rest of your life and unable to get medical treatment, to pay for medication...so in the end everyone comes back to study because they realise that with a degree you can get a job which will get you a better salary, better working conditions.*

In this extract Melita sketches a labour market where there is a hierarchy among different working positions: there are jobs which give you 'a better salary, better working conditions' and those that 'break your back'. Similarly, Filip (SG, MAT) says: 'what can I do with a grammar school? Work as a construction worker for ten years and then it would start...knees, back. I worked at a construction site and it's not a job for life. I wouldn't wish that on anyone'. These extracts resonate with Archer and Hutchings' study (2000) which found that economic benefits were cited as a significant reason for undertaking a degree. According to Archer (2003b), 'many respondents conceptualized graduate jobs as office jobs, that are physically easier to do and are often equally, if not better paid' (p.124).

Like many of their fellow-students, Melita and Filip identify a form of capital operating within this labour market field: HE qualifications which can help obtain the 'better' job option. As Grenfell and James (1998) observe: 'high academic qualifications traditionally tend to "buy" good jobs with good salaries' (p.21). In other words, these students are preparing themselves for participation in the labour market 'game' by accumulating capital to play with and which should put them in a more privileged position in that market over those who have not acquired such capital. Interestingly, although the interviewed students are only at the beginning of their courses, the majority of them seem to have clear professional futures in mind. Students' associations between particular courses and occupational futures conform to Karen's (2002) impression that, in comparison to the US, there is a much tighter connection in Europe between specific educational credentials and occupational outcomes.

Apart from associating HE qualifications in general with better employment opportunities, students also made a distinction between particular faculties with regard to career options and chances of future employment. In this sense, out of the six case study faculties, students at the EEC seem to be the most confident about their job opportunities and they have a clear image of what kind of work their course qualifies them for. These students' impression of their job security is also recognised by their colleagues from the other faculties. For example, Martin (FG, DES) says: 'I think that if you finish FER [EEC] you have a guaranteed job'. A lecturer from the

EEC reinforces this impression: 'I don't think any of our students are unemployed'. Such a link between computing courses and the labour market is also recognised by Boyle et al. (2002). The authors indicate that a degree in computing is seen as a better route to employment than many others.

Similarly to EEC students, the interviewed MAT students seemed confident they would be able to get a job after they complete their course either in the area of computer programming or the financial sector. Interestingly though, none of the students saw themselves as maths teachers, although that was the predominant professional construction students from the other faculties had of maths students. For example, according to Marko (FG, EEC) and Tanja (SG, EEC): 'it's a faculty where you'll learn everything, but it's not very useful unless you succeed as a scientist...but most of them...they will teach in schools' (Marko); 'I would never go there personally because most of them end up being maths teachers and I'm not attracted to that' (Tanja).

Students at the other faculties also had clear occupational images with respect to their own course of study. However, a difference can be observed between medical students, on the one hand, and students from DES, FTB and MGO on the other, in relation to clarity of occupations associated with other courses. Whereas careers after a completed medical course seem to be clear to both medical students and students from the other case study faculties (similarly to the clarity of occupations associated with the EEC course), there seems to be less clarity among students with regard to career options after completing courses at the other three faculties. For example, although design students seem to be aware of the job opportunities available after they complete their course, Rebeka (SG) who is a medical student notes a sense of vagueness about the design profession. She says: 'when you say that you're a designer, and I think that's still an abstract term here, people don't know what that person does...I don't think people would respect such a profession like they do a doctor's'. According to Bartol (SG, DES), there is a generational issue with regard to expected job opportunities after the design course. He says that older people do not know what a designer does and he has to explain to them how it has to do with for example, commercials. These extracts suggest that whereas some courses (e.g. medicine) are associated with clear occupational futures, others are not (e.g. design). Arguably, this could influence course choice.

Vagueness about future career options with regard to particular courses also came up in relation to FTB. On the one hand, just like DES students, FTB students had a clear idea of where they could work after they graduate. These ideas included working as an analyst for a Croatian dairy company (Fran, FG), working as a researcher in a pharmaceutical company (Eli, SG) or as a nutritionist (Lana, FG). Interestingly, when one enters the FTB building one first sees a wall covered with logos of Croatian companies representing students' potential employers. However, other people's lack of clarity with regard to what one does when one completes a course at this faculty can be illustrated with an excerpt from Eli's interview: 'Whenever I tell people I study at PBF [FTB] they think I said PMF [MAT] ...people don't know and then when I start explaining to them, once they even asked me whether I was going to be a cook.' In other words, it seems that there is less clarity about what one does after completing an FTB course in comparison to, for example, MED or EEC.

Finally, the issue of clarity with regard to occupational images also came up in the case of the MGO faculty. For example, Melita (FG) talked about how much she loves nature and said: 'there's a paradox. This occupation mostly destroys and devastates the environment, nature...so sometimes when I think of my occupation I think how fighting that will be like fighting windmills...but that's why I'm interested in energetics and economical ways of using natural energy sources'. And her colleague Andrej (SG) is interested in becoming a speleologist. In other words, these students have an idea of what they could do after they complete their course. However, students interviewed from the other faculties were less clear about the occupational opportunities an MGO degree provides. To illustrate this, according to Nino (SG, EEC), 'I have a friend who studies there [MGO] and I don't know where one can work with that, I really don't have a clue'. Similarly, Fabijan (FG, MED) says: 'what does one do and where does one work? INA [Croatian oil company]?' and Lovro (FG, FTB) asks: 'where are they going to find a job?' Such a focus on future occupational 'imaginaries' as expressed by Nino, Fabijan and Lovro suggest that students might not apply to particular courses unless they perceive their choice as resulting in labour market benefits. In other words, primacy is given to the outcome rather than process of study. According to Finocchietti (2004), in his study of Italian students, 'employment is ranked first in the motivations that push towards university studies' (p.466)<sup>41</sup>.

Lastly, with regard to chances of employment, although the majority of students across the faculties were generally optimistic about finding a job following course completion, several

---

<sup>41</sup> Such findings also resonate with research reported by e.g. Cooke et al. (2004) and Rhodes and Nevill (2004) in the UK context.

students also expressed concern. Mladen (SG, MED), for example, said: 'I'm worried about finding a job. Maybe it's too early to think about these things, but I see my colleagues who struggled here for six years and now they don't even have a place to volunteer'. This point was also brought up by Nino (SG, EEC) in his comment on the medical profession: 'As far as jobs, it's difficult to find one. All the effort you invested is pointless unless you have a connection, unless someone in your family has a private clinic'. Nino's suggestion that securing a job in the medical field requires 'a connection' is similar to Eli's (SG, FTB) observation: 'even though this was my second choice, I am happier that I've enrolled here than in the pharmacy course. Pharmacy is more the type of faculty you enrol into if you're mum has a pharmacy where you can get a job'. In other words, these students suggest how securing a job can involve a joint venture between educational qualifications and other forms of capital (in the quoted cases social capital). This can be illustrated with Rebeka's (SG) ease with regard to employment opportunities as shaped by her family background: 'my dad has a private clinic, so I automatically have a place to work'.

This section has portrayed a labour market field which exerts its effects on the HE system by recognising the value of HE qualifications in general and certain degrees in particular. By doing so, it affects the institutional habituses of faculties and influences students' decisions to continue to HE and their choice of course. In addition, perception of employment opportunities can act as a motivating factor for course completion. In this 'employability' sense, among the six case study faculties, the EEC appears to occupy the dominant position in the HE field. The following section examines a further educational labour market effect – university positioning.

### *University positioning*

In the labour market game, individuals with HE qualifications are not just competing against individuals who do not have such qualifications or who have such qualifications and are studying at the same HE institution; they are also competing against those who have the same type of qualification but from a different HE institution. According to Brown (1996): 'When market crowding occurs, employers become more discerning about the 'status' of credentials. A degree from Oxbridge or an Ivy League university is judged to have greater capital value than one from a little-known university or college in the market for jobs' (p.741). Although the University of Zagreb could be seen as 'a little-known university' in this context, judging by student interviews its credentials have status in the Croatian context: student interviews suggested that a degree

from the University of Zagreb can act as a 'trump card' in the Croatian labour market field. The following extract illustrates this:

K: Did you consider studying medicine at any other HEI in Croatia?

Mladen (SG): Well, that would be the option if I hadn't got into here. But I wouldn't go anywhere else otherwise. *A diploma from Zagreb is a diploma from Zagreb.*

K: What do you mean by that?

Mladen: *Zagreb has higher status. If not during the course, then definitely when you graduate.*

K: Why do you think that?

Mladen: *Tradition and how well equipped the faculty is.* I know that in Y they have just one building, we have more. There are many hospitals in Zagreb, there is just one in Y.

Mladen's interview excerpt suggests that the labour market field rewards certain institutional qualifications over others ('when you graduate'), illustrating Bourdieu's contention that the value of the capital depends on the degree of its recognition (e.g. Grenfell and James, 1998). In other words, here we see contours of an HE field in which different universities operate with different levels of symbolic capital ('Zagreb has *higher* status'), and this observed difference in symbolic capital can influence educational practices ('I wouldn't go anywhere else'). Another medical student, Fabijan (FG), confirms Mladen's impression by saying:

I don't think it's the same if it says University of Zagreb or University of X. I don't think they're necessarily worse than we are, but *there's tradition* and according to what a girl who studies in Z said, *it's easier for them.*

Although in this extract Fabijan attributes high educational status to the University of Zagreb, it is important to note that his attribution (as well as his colleagues') of institutional prestige is different to the institutional prestige associated with Oxbridge for example. An indication of this is that whereas research from the UK (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, Archer and Hutchings 2001) has suggested that the 'elitism' associated with Oxbridge can be 'alienating' for working-class students (e.g. Archer (2003b) mentions that Oxford and Cambridge were recognized as 'only admitting students with titled, professional parents' (p.128), none of the interviewed students reported feeling alienated by the 'prestige' of the University of Zagreb. A possible explanation for this is

that the interviewed Croatian students did not identify the University of Zagreb's prestige as socially marked, i.e. they do not perceive the student intake as socio-economically privileged<sup>42</sup>.

Judging by student interviews, the 'quality' accorded to the University of Zagreb is constructed on the basis of labour market opportunities and tradition, the University of Zagreb being the oldest university in Croatia. Students' attribution of quality to tradition has come up in research from the UK: for example, Reay et al. (2005, 2001) quote Dr. Anderson, one of their interviewees, who said that: 'A "good" university is a university that has been there for a long time' (4.4). Students' subjective appraisal of the quality of courses offered at other Croatian HE institutions in relation to Zagreb University reinforces its symbolic capital. This appraisal is somewhat arbitrary, since there are no systematic internal or external quality assurance procedures carried out in the Croatian HE system that are made available to the general public and which could inform HE choice. Thus relating tradition to quality may be misleading. In addition, such informal constructions of HE institutions as more or less prestigious can have repercussions with regard to how well informed students are of this distinction. In the labour market context, students with higher levels of cultural and social capital are arguably more likely to have an awareness of institutional prestige, advantaging them to those who do not have such information sources. This point is made by Reay et al. (2005) with reference to individuals who are so-called 'contingent' choosers, i.e. pupils from a working-class background who do not recognize status distinctions between HE institutions or experience them as insignificant. However, in the conducted study where the sample included only students who had enrolled into the University of Zagreb, all the interviewed students recognized differences between higher education institutions.

To conclude, it has been recognised that the labour market field has an effect on institutional positions in the HE field. In other words, players (HE institutions, students) who have institutionalized cultural capital (prestigious degree) have a greater chance of success in playing the labour market game (students getting a good job) in comparison to those who do not. However, institutionalized cultural capital is just one 'card' operating in the labour market. Indeed, judging by student responses, the Croatian labour market field is not only a field of class dynamics (as indicated by (non)possession of degree), but also gender forces – the labour market

---

<sup>42</sup> However, social associations were made in relation to the Faculty of Medicine. That is, several students who were not on the medical course described the faculty as prestigious and as attended by doctor's sons and daughters. The social marking of the Faculty of Medicine is addressed in more detail in Chapter 10 on the inclusive and exclusive aspects of institutional habituses.

field makes a distinction between 'pink' and 'blue' players. The following section examines such gender streaming of the labour market and how this might affect educational choices.

*'Pink' and 'blue' players: gender in the field*

The interviewed students suggested that there was a gender dimension to the labour market field, i.e. that there are some occupations which are considered to be more appropriate for women and others as more appropriate for men<sup>43</sup>. This gendered division of labour appears to have an effect on the gender profile of the student body. For example, according to Lana (FG):

*My course [Nutrition] is more for women than men.*

K: Why?

Lana: *Because of where you can work afterwards and how you approach work. I think it's more appropriate for girls because they are more gentle, more considerate, they understand certain things more than men. At the other two courses [Food technology and Biotechnology] I think it's the same for men and women, maybe even more for men at the food technology course because it involves working with machinery.*

Lana's interview extract illustrates a gendered labour market field, which favours women in the case of nutrition. Fran (FG), Lana's colleague at FTB recognizes this when he says how the jobs associated with the faculty are 'female jobs'. When he was asked what he meant by a 'female job', Fran said: 'Like it was in communism. Women do the easier jobs; men do the more difficult ones'. This illustrates not only Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) contention that women are condemned to professions 'requiring a "feminine" disposition' (p.78) but also how such occupational dispositions can 'condemn' men to the more 'difficult' jobs. Marko's (EEC, FG) interview extract is a further illustration of the impact gendered occupational images can have on gendered course constructions:

Well, maybe it's a bit chauvinist...but *when you say to someone 'engineer', then it's more logical it's a man...*in general such occupations are somehow more for men. You can kind of think of them as electricians, and who's ever seen a woman electrician?

---

<sup>43</sup> CBS (2009) data on the gender composition of the Croatian labour force shows a gender differentiated labour market. For example, men form the majority in industries such as agriculture, hunting and forestry (72.6%), fishing (82.2%), mining (84.7%) and construction work (88.4%), whereas women form the majority in areas such as education (75.7%) and health and social work (78.1%).

Both Lana's and Marko's interviews suggested the possibility that gendered occupational futures can influence how students perceive the gender 'appropriateness' of particular courses (e.g. 'my course is more for women') and resulting course choices.

To further explore the issue of course gendering, it is interesting to examine the gender composition of the student body at the six case study faculties. Table 9.1 shows how female students form the majority of students at the FTB (83.8%), DES (75.8%) and MED (65.6%), whereas male students form the majority at the EEC (76.6%) and MGO (69.1%). MAT seems to have a rather even distribution of women (50.6%) and men (49.4%).

Table 9.1 Distribution of male and female students across case study faculties.

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Faculty	DES	Count	8	25	33
		% within faculty	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%
	MED	Count	64	122	186
		% within faculty	34.4%	65.6%	100.0%
	MAT	Count	41	42	83
		% within faculty	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
	MGO	Count	56	25	81
		% within faculty	69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
	FTB	Count	13	67	80
		% within faculty	16.3%	83.8%	100.0%
	EEC	Count	128	39	167
		% within faculty	76.6%	23.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	310	320	630
		% within faculty	49.2%	50.8%	100.0%

Croatian research reported by Ilišin (2008) shows similar findings: men form a significant majority in the technical sciences (in this study the MGO and EEC), whereas women constitute a significant majority in all other fields. And this disparity is not just a Croatian cultural specificity. Galland and Oberti (2000) find that gender is a determining factor in the choice of higher learning institutions and disciplinary orientation in the French HE context. In addition, similarly to the computing course in Croatia, Boyle et al. (2002) identify a significant pro-male bias in entry figures at computer science courses at two UK universities. This can be further reinforced by Gilchrist, Phillips and Ross's (2003) observation that: 'It is only in some subjects and in the higher education population as whole that we have a gender balance that broadly represents the overall population' (p.75). According to the authors, engineering has an overrepresentation of men and education of women. Leathwood and Read (2009) contend that in the UK, 'more

women than men are training to be doctors – hence discussions about the feminization of the profession’ (p.10).

A possible explanation for gender disparities between the Croatian faculties can be identified in students’ gendered constructions of their courses. In the questionnaire, this issue was addressed with the question of whether students thought their course was ‘more appropriate for women’, ‘more appropriate for men’ or ‘equally appropriate for both women and men’. The majority of students (70.4%) reported they thought their course was equally appropriate for both women and men, 23.5 per cent indicated that it was more appropriate for men and 6.1 per cent that it was more appropriate for women. The Kruskal Wallis test ( $\chi^2(6, N = 635) = 100.313, p < .001$ ) indicated a statistically significant difference between students’ estimations of the gender appropriateness of their course by faculty. That is, whereas 45.8 per cent of students at the EEC and 42.5 per cent at the MGO reported their courses were more appropriate for men (and the majority of students at these faculties are men), the same was indicated by a significantly lower percentage of students at the other faculties (FTB: 1.2%, DES: 6.3%, MED: 12.5%, MAT: 12.8%). At these latter faculties (where the majority of students are women), a significant majority of students indicated they thought their course was equally appropriate for both women and men (FTB: 79.5%, DES: 93.8%, MED: 84.8%, MAT: 86%).

The Mann Whitney test was used to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between women and men with regard to their response to this question of gender appropriateness of course. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference ( $U = 38999.0, z = -5.296, p < .001$ ): according to frequency counts (see Table 9.2), a higher percentage of female students indicated they thought their course was equally appropriate for both women and men (80.7%) in comparison to their male counterparts (59.6%).

Table 9.2 Male and female students' estimations of the gender appropriateness of their courses.

			Gender appropriateness of course.			
			More appropriate for women	More appropriate for men	Equally appropriate for both women and men	Total
Gender	Male	Count	17	107	183	307
		% within Gender	5.5%	34.9%	59.6%	100.0%
	Female	Count	20	41	255	316
		% within Gender	6.3%	13.0%	80.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	37	148	438	623
		% within Gender	5.9%	23.8%	70.3%	100.0%

These results suggest that men may have more gender stereotypical constructions of their courses than women do. Mili's (FG, MAT) interview excerpt illustrates an example of such gender stereotyping:

I asked a guy last year... I don't know, something wasn't clear to me and another guy said 'don't bother explaining. You can't explain that to girls'.

So far, the interview extracts have illustrated the workings of gender in the labour market field with regard to gender 'appropriate' occupations, and the HE field with regard to gender 'appropriate' courses, i.e. gendered aspects of institutional habituses. However, it is important to address how such gendered practices are accounted for by the students. Two dominant approaches can be identified in the student interviews: gendered natural abilities and gendered social roles.

To exemplify the natural abilities approach, in an earlier interview excerpt Lana describes women as 'more gentle, more considerate'. Such an approach to gender distinctions can also be identified in Jelena's (FG, EEC) interview extract: 'Our brains work differently. For example, people were surprised when I told them maths was my favourite subject. I don't know. It's just the brain structure. I believe women are better as social types...they're more communicative and men are better at maths. But there are exceptions of course'. Jelena's biological account of gender differences is similar to that of one of the female lecturers at the same faculty:

You have to be born for something like this...my mother is a psychiatrist and she said that the girls who end up at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering have a poor identification with their

father...I can tell you that all of us who complete this course, *we have a male streak in us. I think totally differently to my mum...*I'm much closer to my dad's thinking, my husband's and my two sons'. *I have a technical brain* and I can tell you that most women here function like that.

These extracts indicate that the students and teacher quoted believe that different courses require different gendered dispositions rooted in 'natural' differences between women and men. Such stereotypical gendered representations given by the quoted individuals illustrate Bourdieu's (e.g. 1992) observation that external structures can constrain action but in a way that does not overlook the individual's contribution. In this structure-agency interrelationship sense, Bourdieu alludes to his concept of 'habitus', whose 'gendered' aspect is spelled out more specifically by Reay (e.g. 1998) in her use of the term 'gendered habitus'. For Reay, this concept encompasses a common understanding of the world which consists of portraying the gendered division of labour as 'natural', which is precisely what the quoted interview extracts do (e.g. 'brains work differently', 'a technical brain').

'Natural' gendered dispositions can also be identified in the following extract from an interview with Tea (SG), a medical student:

There are different specializations in medicine. For example, *women usually specialize in paediatrics, and there are much fewer women surgeons.*

K: Why do you think this is so?

Tea: *There are more male surgeons because strength is required.* We had a few lectures in anatomy and professors from the orthopaedic department came and you can see that physical power is needed. You need to be able to operate. *And then women...you have discrimination. Firstly because of physical strength and then discrimination because you need to work a lot and you can't because of the family.* And yet you keep on having to be well informed, new prostheses arrive, operations. But women can do some other jobs. For example, when we talked about summer internships *a lot of the guys said they couldn't be paediatricians.* That the noise would kill them. And a lot of girls said that that's what they wanted, that they can cope with the noise. *So, there are some specializations which are more for men, because of physical and psychological abilities, but also women are good with children and it may be easier for a lot of children to communicate with a female doctor because she's like a mother to them.*

K: How difficult or easy is it to get the specialization that you want?

Tea: *Most doctors take men for the specialization because they don't have such a feeling for family life like women have. And if a woman gets pregnant, it means she has to stop the specialization. And in today's profit driven world, in some places they even tell you that you can't get pregnant or maybe only once during your specialization. That's not ok.* And they say how there aren't enough children in Croatia. I have heard that women

have to work much more, that they do jobs which are more challenging, where you have to do several things at the same time, which are more difficult and require more patience, *whereas men get prestigious specializations.*

Tea's interview extract illustrates several important points. Firstly, there is a gendered construction of specializations in medicine, i.e. some specializations are considered to be more appropriate for women (e.g. paediatrics) and others for men (e.g. surgery). This furthers the point made about a gendered labour market. Secondly, these professional dispositions are related to stereotypes associated with natural abilities (e.g. physical and psychological characteristics, women having a feeling for family life). Thirdly, although such gender constraints limit the professional trajectories of both men and women, the constraints placed on women in this sub-field of the labour market seem to lead to less prestigious specializations, i.e. the constraints have different weight. And finally, there is recognition by the individual that such practices are discriminatory, but not in a way that resists gender stereotypes. Rather, Tea acknowledges 'natural' differences between men and women and thinks the labour market should accommodate these. As with the previous interview extracts which assumed natural differences between men and women, there is a sense of Bourdieu's contention that 'symbolic power cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it' (2001, p.40). Similarly, according to Dillabough (2004), such internalized, taken-for-granted constructions of masculinity and femininity illustrate how domination becomes possible, since they 'demonstrate the part played by individuals in enacting domination as an embodied reality even if they themselves were not fully aware that they were engaged in such domination' (p.502).

Although in his questionnaire Fabijan (FG) indicated that he thought his course was equally appropriate for women and men, the gender dimension with regard to medical specializations was brought up in his interview:

*Women go into paediatrics, gynaecology and general practice and men mostly go into surgery. I don't know, I mean I am not against women, but it's difficult for them in surgeries. It's physically quite difficult, but not impossible, it would be good if there were more female surgeons, why not? But it's not easy. Also, maybe it's just tradition. Men are surgeons and that's that. A teacher had asked us what we wanted to specialize in and she told us that we guys have a better chance than girls. So, it's still like that.*

This extract again portrays gendered constructions of specializations which are attributed to natural abilities ('it's physically quite difficult'). However, Fabijan also introduces the notion of

'tradition', i.e. he explains such constructions in terms of an inherited past. This time dimension illustrates Dillabough's (2004) reading of Bourdieu whereby 'male domination can be traced to historical ideas that are embodied by social actors in the present' (p.494). Judging by similarities in the gender profile of students at computer science or education courses across different cultures, such durable historical ideas about gender are also cross-cultural.

Fabijan's excerpt also highlights the ways in which such 'naturalized' gender distinctions can be reinforced by the educational system ('she told us that we guys have a better chance than girls'). To further this argument, one of the interviewed lecturers at MED makes similar biological distinctions: 'You know, men have a male intelligence, they are courageous, fast...it's excellent to have women in the team too. They're composed, determined, faithful. When you have all these characteristics in one team, then you get a good team'. Further examples of this gender reinforcement ranged from an example of a teacher who made sexist remarks – 'I had a run in with this one teacher who is sexist...he's like 100 years old and if they had retired him it wouldn't have happened' (Danijela, SG, MED), to the impression certain female students had at male dominated faculties that certain teachers helped them more because they were girls. What this suggests is that institutional practices not only classify students by recognizing their (non)possession of cultural, social and economic capital as discussed in previous chapters, but they also classify by gender. Importantly, what we can see in these interviews is expressions of a gendered and gendering habitus across generations, i.e. teachers and students, which reflects Bourdieu's (2001) contention that structures of domination are the product of 'an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction' (p.34).

Most of the interview quotes so far have illustrated biological/psychological visions of the differences between the sexes. However, certain students also gave social accounts of differences which focused on the role of the woman in the family and household. Melita's extract illustrates this:

K: You wrote in the questionnaire that you think this course is more appropriate for men. Why?  
Melita (FG):...*sometimes you're on an oil platform and you cannot move. Then if you are a woman, that's difficult. It is rare to see a husband who will take care of the home, child, I mean there are such husbands today, but I don't know. A guy is a guy. Croatia is still a patriarchal country if you ask me...so, I would like to study energetics for my Masters because that gives me more options. I'd like to go and work on a platform for a while when I'm young, but I know I wouldn't want to do that for too long.*

Interestingly, Melita does not see occupations associated with the MGO as innately male, i.e. as related to men's natural abilities (like surgery or food technology or engineering were constructed as male labour market sub-fields by certain students); however, she sees the social role of women as wives and mothers as constraining labour market opportunities. In this sense, we can again notice the workings of a gendered habitus, this time with a focus on its social rather than biological aspects and how it can operate as a constraining framework. Similarly, Sonja (SG, MAT) wrote in her questionnaire that she thought her course was more appropriate for men and explains this in the interview by saying: 'I think that if you want to succeed you need to invest a lot of time into it, and I think that the majority of *women...they're not determined enough and ambitious for a career...they're more family oriented*'. In these extracts we can observe the gendered structuring of spaces, where men are allocated to the public space of career development and women to the private space of the family home.

What the quotes have suggested is that students apply restrictive gender stereotypes both to occupational images and their courses. By doing so, they illustrate the gendered nature of the labour market field and HE field and how these 'fit' together. This corresponds to Ilišin's (2008) observation that 'course choice is significantly related to gender and it reflects the long known gender differences in affinities and professional orientation' (p.233). However, students' reactions to such gender related restrictions are not those of resistance but rather of complicity, illustrated by structural acceptance ('A guy is a guy. Croatia is still a patriarchal country if you ask me') and gendered actions ('women go into paediatrics'). For Bourdieu, it is through such 'doxic' acceptance that women and men 'make' the symbolic violence they undergo (2001). In addition, Bourdieu (1992) argues these stereotypical gender roles are 'historically contingent fallouts of a given balance of power between classes, ethnic groups or genders' (p.14). Also, as Lovell (2000) notes, Bourdieu explains such gender stereotypical constructions by stating that girls early on acquire 'the stigmata of femininity' and 'boys the bearing of masculinity' as a result of their immersion within 'gendered practical schemes' into which they are channelled from birth (p.33).

The naturalizing of gender practices that can be observed in the student narratives is, as Bourdieu (e.g. 1992) noticed, a process of external structures constraining action but in a way that does not overlook the individual's contribution. In fact, what we can see is a two-way gender domination process: on the one hand, the labour market and the HE field act as structures of domination which impose gender constraints, and on the other hand, students themselves perpetuate these structures through embodied stereotypical gender practices. In this latter sense, through the

workings of embodied gender stereotypes, individuals themselves contribute to limiting their own scope of freedom. This two-way process illustrates Bourdieu's (1992) contention that social divisions and mental schemata are homologous, where the latter is the embodiment of the former:

There exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world – particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields – and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it (p.12).

For Bourdieu (2001), both women and men are victims of their own habitus, shaped by symbolic violence, in that both genders are 'attuned' to the social order which projects constructions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity', and this can lead to educational self-exclusion for both genders. Having said this, it is important to note that educational self-exclusion potentially has different weight for women than men in the labour market: typically male courses such as electrical engineering are financially better rewarded on the labour market than typically female courses such as nutrition. As Leathwood and Read (2009) note: 'A gender pay gap for higher education graduates persists across the world' (p.39). An interviewed teacher at MED explains why there has been an increase in female medical students over the years by drawing on this financial aspect. She says: 'new occupations have appeared...and these are connected to technology and money. And we know that men go where there is either a technological aspect or money, of course they go there'. Bourdieu (1984) notes that: 'an increase in the proportion of women indicates the whole trend of an occupation, in particular the absolute or relative devaluation' (p.108).

According to Francis (2001), feminist perspectives share the following commonalities: they are concerned with gender, there is a perception of women as generally disadvantaged in gender relations (while often viewing men as requiring liberation too), there is a perception of this gender inequity as wrong and an aim to change things for the better. In this respect, Bourdieu's work has a feminist dimension. However, Witz (2004) captures well the point where Bourdieu parts with certain feminist approaches:

Bourdieu has bad news for feminists, which is that they are mistaken in thinking that the power of reason can have any serious dent in the symbolic machinery of male dominance (p.214).

Indeed, Bourdieu (2001) states that: 'If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions' (p.39). In opposition, Butler (1997) states the following:

I would insist that the speech act, as a rite of institution, is one whose contexts are never fully determined in advance, and that the possibility of the speech act to take a non-ordinary meaning, to function in contexts where it has not belonged, is precisely the political promise of the performative, one that positions the performative at the center of the politics of hegemony... (p.181).

Potter's (2000) response to this would be: 'Determination is something to be investigated sociologically rather than logically contrasted with freedom' (p.231). Indeed, the quoted student interview excerpts with their illustrations of a gendered labour market field and stereotypical physical and psychological representations of gender resonate with McNay's (2004) reading of Bourdieu whereby:

[Bourdieu] views material forces such as the division of labour and segregation within the work force as central to gender oppression, he regards the internalisation of symbolic gender norms within physical and psychological dispositions as the most important element in the reproduction of sexual division (p.182).

An excerpt from an interview with a female MAT student illustrates this point: 'the female role in the family is so rooted in society...especially here in Croatia. So I think it's also subconscious, you cannot just get rid of it' (Sonja, SG). For Bourdieu (e.g. 1992), it is on this 'subconscious' level that habitus operates.

Although certain students are aware of stereotypes with regard to gender roles, there is an underlying 'rooted' doxic acceptance of these stereotypes which seems to enable their reproduction. However, in relation to this it is also important to notice cases of students whose educational choices have not been gender stereotypical and which would appear to resist such doxic acceptance. In particular, this refers to MGO and EEC female students and FTB and DES male students. The focus here will be on the five MGO and EEC female students interviewed since it is at these faculties that a higher percentage of students reported their course was more appropriate for men.

For Ružica (MGO), the undergraduate course is only a step towards a graduate course in energetics which she considers to be an appropriate career option for women; Tanja's father studied at the EEC and he encouraged her to apply; Matilda's (EEC) educational experiences up to university included male dominated classrooms: 'there were thirty of us in primary school, five girls. Secondary school, twenty-five of us, three girls...it would be strange for me if there were a hundred girls around me'; Jelena (EEC) was consulted about her course by a career advisor and she and Melita (MGO) said they had always preferred male company. For example, Melita says:

I always get on better with men. I just can't communicate with the six, seven girls in my group. I think they're so boring. Typical stories, boyfriends, what to wear...I really don't find that interesting...there are a thousand things we could talk about, but they just revolve around the same stories. I find that boring.

Ružica's account of higher education choice embodies gender stereotypes since she chooses the 'feminine' career option in a 'masculine' world of mining. Similarly, a contribution to Melita's course change after her first year of MGO studies is that she does not see any job opportunities suitable for women after she completes her course. What their cases illustrate is that even though practice may suggest a transformative aspect to gender habitus (e.g. a female student at a male faculty), the underlying motivation for the transformative moment may be quite the opposite (e.g. getting a 'female' job). However, the other three students break 'gender normality' (Skeggs 2004a, p.22): they construct their EEC course and subsequent employment opportunities as equally appropriate for both women and men. What these three students have in common is that they were good at maths and sciences in school. In this case, Bourdieu's (1979, p.83) contention that exceptional abilities helped socially disadvantaged students overcome their familial disadvantage could also be adapted to capture the gender aspect, i.e. being good in maths gives the three female students the 'currency' to enter a male dominated field. Further influences which contributed to these students breaking with stereotypical gender practices included previous educational experiences (field effect) for Matilda and significant others (father and career advisor) for Tanja and Jelena. In other words, the 'agency' of these students is akin to Bourdieu's relational understanding of gender and field.

To conclude, the first part of this chapter mapped out students' perceived interrelationship between the labour market and HE 'playing' fields in Croatia. This interrelationship was addressed in relation to students' perceptions of HE qualifications as not only increasing

employment opportunities, but also securing 'good jobs'. The second part of the chapter discussed the extension of the 'labour market effect' to choice of university and particular courses. In this 'employability' sense, the University of Zagreb and, within it, the EEC were identified as occupying dominant positions in the HE field. Finally, gender was identified as a force linking the labour market and HE field. Its impact was recognised as resulting from a complex interrelationship between the gendered and gendering 'cross-cultural' habitus of individuals and institutions which is externalised in stereotypical divisions of labour and educational choices. Patterns and exceptions to practices which would suggest the workings of a gender habitus were addressed in terms of Bourdieu's relational understanding of structure and agency.

**INCLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL HABITUSES**

Previous chapters have touched upon the interaction between individual resources and the institutional practices which (mis)recognize them, i.e. the ways in which the presence (or absence) of particular institutional mechanisms translates students' social (dis)advantage into educational (dis)advantage (e.g. oral exams, assumed student knowledge). This chapter explores such mechanisms in more depth. The concept of 'institutional habitus' (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, 2001, Thomas 2002, McDonough 1996) serves as the chapter's conceptual lens. According to McDonough (1996), institutional habitus can be understood as a complex blend of agency and structure which encompasses the influence of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation. In this sense, 'institutional habitus' seems to capture, on the one hand, institutional characteristics which are accommodating of socio-cultural differences between students (i.e. positive mediation) and contribute to equal educational opportunities. However, on the other hand, it also encompasses characteristics which reinforce socio-cultural differences between students (i.e. negative mediation), leading to the educational advantaging of the socially advantaged. In an effort to signal more clearly the workings of both socially sensitive and insensitive institutional practices, the chapter highlights a distinction between 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' aspects of institutional habitus. The focus of this chapter is on institutional aspects which have different implications for students belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds. However, it is also important to re-emphasize what is often overlooked in similar research studies (e.g. Reay et al. 2005, Thomas 2002) which is that institutional habitus also has its gendered aspect. This issue was discussed in the previous chapter, particularly in relation to course choice.

Reay et al. (2005, 2001) have identified 'classed' aspects of institutional habitus at secondary school level as organisational practices, cultural and expressive characteristics, curriculum offer and educational status. This categorization will serve as the backdrop for a discussion of the socially inclusive and exclusive institutional practices which were identified in the researched Croatian HE context. More specifically, identified organisational practices include the admission process, group size, assessment, as well as faculty resources and organisation; the workings of cultural and expressive characteristics are illustrated with regard to student-teacher communication and student characteristics, and curriculum offer is addressed through students' perceptions of course content relevance and its transmission. Finally, the 'prestige' of certain case

study faculties is discussed as indicative of their educational status. Each of these institutional aspects is referred to in the following sections, starting with an examination of the current admission process as an example of a socially exclusive organisational practice.

### *Securing a place*

To secure a place at a faculty within the University of Zagreb students need to go through an admission process which is not administered at university level, but rather at the level of individual faculties. The process begins when a student formally applies for a place on a course by going to the selected faculty or having someone go on their behalf and registering them for admission. To register for the faculty's consideration, applicants need to bring written confirmation that they have attended a four-year secondary school, their secondary school grade transcripts, the result of their final 'matura' exam, their birth certificate, confirmation of nationality and confirmation that they have paid the application costs. If students want to apply to more than one faculty or department, they have to go through the same process separately. Then, once registered as candidates, students take a written entrance exam on a set day and time and wait for the announcement of the list of successful applicants. The final decision on the applicants' success is based on points allocated according to the following criteria: (a) achievements from previous secondary education (the overall GPA for the four years of secondary schooling and the results of the state 'matura' exam); (b) results of the entrance exam (a maximum of four secondary school subjects are tested according to grammar school programmes and textbooks), and (c) special knowledge, skills or ability (knowledge of a third foreign language, another secondary school completed, excellent results in state competitions in the relevant subject, top sportsperson). The overall number of points the students gain determines whether they are going to get into the course they have chosen and what their fee paying status will be. According to the Croatian Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (2003), the university, polytechnic or school of professional HE determines the procedure for selecting candidates in a manner that guarantees the equality of all candidates irrespective of their race, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, assets, birth, social status, disability, sexual orientation or age. However, students' accounts suggest that in practice different aspects of the admissions procedure contribute to reinforcing social inequalities.

To illustrate this preferential treatment, entrance exams are based on the grammar school curriculum. That is, the knowledge of candidates is tested on up to four subjects, chosen on the basis of discipline requirements, and candidates who attended vocational secondary education are expected to prepare for the exam by using grammar school textbooks. In other words, the HE field frames positions in the secondary education field by attributing educational status to grammar schools over vocational schools. This is similar to Reay et al.'s (2005) contention that: 'Framing the institutional habituses of the schools and colleges are the institutional habituses of the universities' (p.47). Importantly, this means that it is routinely expected that students from grammar schools will be continuing to HE and the chapter on cultural capital illustrated this; as Karen (2002) notes, one's track in high school becomes 'the ticket' to one's specific place in the tertiary educational system' (p.192). Significantly, the chapter on cultural capital also noted that students who had attended vocational schooling tended to be first generation students. In fact, all of the interviewed students in this research study who had completed a vocational school were first generation students. In other words, basing the entrance exam on the grammar school curriculum biases the admission process in favour of second generation students who are more likely to have completed grammar school education.

The impact of social inequalities on HE access as mediated through this organisational practice can also be observed with regard to the content of entrance exams at certain faculties within the University of Zagreb (e.g. Architecture, Political Science, Education and Philosophy). That is, apart from testing students' knowledge in particular subjects, these faculties require students to take a 'general culture' exam, which can include anything from current political affairs to literature and sports. Lana (FG, FTB) had applied for a place at the Faculty of Philosophy, where she took the general culture exam, and she describes it as follows:

*It's everything and anything: who won in tennis when, who played with whom, basketball, the distance of light between the earth and the sun. Everything, general culture. Questions you can expect on 'Who wants to be a millionaire' and much more than that. It's not fair. One should be into sports, know all the rules, it's like playing the lottery. I mean, I passed, but I don't know how.*

Damir (SG, MAT), who attended a grammar school, comments on the general culture exam at the Faculty of Architecture as follows: 'the problem is you can't prepare for that. You can prepare for maths, but you can't prepare for general culture. What can you do? Take an encyclopaedia and go from A to Z?' In other words, the entrance exam requires students to have a grasp of both high and popular culture which is identified as significant knowledge by academic

staff. In institutional terms, as the chapter on cultural capital suggested, students tended to identify grammar schools as providing such general culture knowledge and second generation students are more likely to have completed a grammar school education. For example, a second generation grammar school pupil said that in comparison to vocational pupils: 'I think our general culture is much higher'. In sketching different positions in the HE field, we can observe here hierarchical positions between academic staff and students, where the former impose the rules of the game which position certain students in more dominant positions over others. And importantly, such positioning is socially biased. Indeed, use of general culture exams by academic staff reinforce Bourdieu's contention, as interpreted by Robbins (1993), that students from less socio-economically privileged backgrounds are at an unfair disadvantage as a result of a 'conspiratorial collusion between middle-class staff and middle-class students which meant that these students received a structurally preferential treatment which was a kind of cheating' (p.153).

Since the entrance exam is a high stake exam, a further form of educational capital is activated for the purposes of HE access – private tutoring. Out of the 28 students interviewed, eleven had taken private lessons and only two of the eleven students were first generation students. One of these first generation students was Lana (FTB) who took private lessons in maths to prepare her for the entrance exam since she attended a vocational school and the maths examined was based on the grammar school programme.

The difference between students with regard to the opportunity to take private lessons can be illustrated with Bartol's (SG, DES) and Katarina's (FG, DES) examples: Bartol attended a six month preparatory course at a specialized institution in Zagreb, whereas Katarina did not have this opportunity. She says:

The majority of people, as I like to put it, have bought their entrance exam. Because their parents gave 7000, 10000 kuna [approx. £820, £1120] and they were preparing with teachers teaching at the faculty. And of course they could enrol easily. Ok, they had to study too...but I just have a feeling it's unfair.

Katarina did not have the opportunity to attend such extensive preparations since she is not from Zagreb and she also said her parents could not afford private tuition.

Research findings on private tutoring in Croatia (Jokić and Ristić-Dedić 2007) reinforce the identified financial dimension of private tuition. The authors show that higher estimations of

family income are positively associated with more frequent use of private tuition. In addition, the authors indicate that the majority of first year undergraduate students in their research study felt that richer parents could afford better private tuition. In other words, it is not only the quantity of private tuition, but also its quality that is affected by one's economic status. To illustrate this, Katarina's colleague Željka (SG), who estimated her family's income as 'above average', is a student who had the privilege of preparing for the entrance exam with a teacher from the faculty. She says: 'I mean it cost, like all preparatory courses do, but I don't regret the money because I learned a lot of things, not just for the entrance exam, but also later for the course'. What her extract illustrates is how economic and social capital can buy educational advantages, as well as how teachers reinforce disadvantage; preparing for the entrance exam at DES with the teacher from the faculty costs a lot of money, yet successful enrolment seems to be guaranteed. In addition, as Katarina's interview excerpt suggested, students who do not come from areas where there are organised courses for preparing applicants are also disadvantaged in comparison to those who have this option. For instance, Ružica (SG, MGO) who comes from a coastal Croatian town came to Zagreb especially for this reason:

K: Did you prepare in any particular way for the entrance exam?

Ružica: Yeah. I took a course.

K: Where?

Ružica: Here in Zagreb.

K: How come you took it in Zagreb?

Ružica: *You don't have these courses where I come from. Everyone goes to Zagreb.*

A final point in relation to admission procedures relates to its affective dimension. That is, many of the students interviewed talked about the admission process as a stressful time. For example, Mladen (SG), a MED student, comments on the entrance exam as follows: 'It's stressful rather than difficult. It's terribly stressful because you know it's your only chance and after that there is no going back, there is no retake. I mean, you can wait for another year I guess'. Similarly, Ružica (SG, MGO) says:

They get you scared about the entrance exam, you know, this is a life decision, the most important decision in your life.

K: Who says that?

Ružica: Everyone. I don't know. When I told people that it wasn't the most important decision of their lives, that they could always change their course, enrol into another one, that you always

have choices in life, they tell me “what kind of stupidities are you saying?!”. For a whole lot of people this is a life decision. They have such an attitude towards it and I don’t like that at all. *We all came to the entrance exam totally scared.*

Further reinforcement of these students’ experiences can be illustrated with Figure 10.1 below. The photograph shows the entrance to the University of Zagreb’s student centre above which there are three posters ‘advertising’ the university’s open day. The first one on the left says: ‘I’m shaking’ (‘Tresem se’), the following one says: ‘My sight is getting blurry’ (‘Muti mi se vid’) and the third one: ‘I’m biting my nails’ (‘Grizem nokte’). The intention behind the posters is to express how students feel about the admission process (e.g. My sight gets blurry from the thought of the entrance exam). Although all of the interviewed students, irrespective of social background, reported negative emotional experiences with the admission process, it is suggested that for students who are new to the HE experience, i.e. first generation students, this might be a particularly discouraging experience.



Figure 10.1 Entrance to the University of Zagreb’s student centre (by D. Rister).

The aim of this section was to ‘socially’ unpick the university admission process in order to illustrate how this organisational practice privileges students from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. To this extent, it was suggested that entrance exams based on grammar school programmes, as well as the so-called ‘general culture’ exam, disadvantage vocational pupils who are more likely to be first generation students. In addition, the financial and physical accessibility of private tutoring for university purposes was identified as socially differentiated, educationally privileging students from financially privileged families and those from urban areas. Finally, the negative affective dimension of the admission process was identified as discouraging for potential applicants.

The following sections address the contribution particular institutional characteristics have for the educational experiences of students who were successful in gaining a university place. These characteristics are not necessarily a definitive list of significant institutional factors shaping students' HE experiences. Rather, they encompass institutional issues raised by the interviewed students and which illustrate socially inclusive and exclusive practices which make up different institutional habituses. These include: size of course, teacher-student communication, course content, assessment, faculty resources and organisation, educational status and student characteristics. Table 10.1 outlines brief notes on these aspects of institutional habitus which were identified as affecting student experiences across the case study faculties.

Table 10.1 Characteristics of the case study faculties – an overview.

	School of Design	Faculty of Medicine	Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing	Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology	Department of Mathematics	Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil
Number of students	33	364	1097	187	523	296
Teacher-student communication	Varied reports, though generally friendly	Varied reports, though generally remote and inaccessible	Varied reports, though generally accessible if required	Varied reports, though generally remote and inaccessible	Varied reports, though generally friendly	Varied reports, though generally friendly
Course content	First year: mathematics, geometry difficult, seen as unnecessary	First year: anatomy difficult, a lot of theory, rote learning, would like more 'clinical' subjects	First year: mathematics difficult	First year: mathematics difficult	No particular subject identified, consistency emphasized	First year: mathematics difficult
Assessment	Written and oral/subjective marking	Written and oral/subjective marking	Written	Written	Written and oral/subjective marking	Written
Resources Institutional imagery and educational status	Unsatisfactory Small faculty, competitive entrance exam, family atmosphere, intense, difficult, creative	Unsatisfactory Intense, difficult, rote learning, lengthy course, elite	Satisfactory Large faculty, well organised, technologically well equipped, problem-solving, prestigious, male	Unsatisfactory Not well organised or equipped, female, second choice	Satisfactory Well organised, technologically well equipped, difficult	Unsatisfactory Not well organised, not well technologically equipped, male
People	Creative, alternative	Determined, hard-working	Intelligent, naturally gifted, male	Trendy dress, female	Intelligent, naturally gifted	'Outdoor' type, male

Quinn et al. (2005) identify high student-staff ratio as an explanatory factor for student non-completion. This link was not made explicitly by any of the Croatian interviewees; however, several students did relate their educational experiences to the size of their course. These individuals studied either at DES or the EEC, i.e. at either the smallest or the largest faculty among the selected case studies; the size of the course varied from only 33 first year students (DES) to 1097 students (EEC) in the academic year 2006/2007. The size of the student body at the other courses was as follows: MAT (523), MED (364), MGO (296), and FTB (187).

With regard to DES and EEC, a distinction between the two courses can be observed in the student interviews. The small size of DES was described by most students at this faculty as positive, since it was identified as contributing to closer contact with colleagues and staff. For example, Martin (FG, DES) when talking about his colleagues says: 'we all go out together and we have parties'. Similarly, for Mathea (SG, DES): 'We all get on really well. There are people who spend more time...like I spend more time with a few girls and boys from the faculty, but we all function well together as a group'. On the other hand, Bartol's (SG, DES) quote captures the effect of small student numbers on relations with teachers: 'Family atmosphere. We almost refer to our teachers as 'ti'. Almost as 'ti'. I mean the only reason why we don't is out of respect, but with the assistants we say 'ti'.<sup>44</sup> This closeness can also be reinforced by an excerpt from Željka's (SG, DES) interview: 'they're approachable. We're really close to them and we talk to them a lot...at some other departments you go there, sit down, listen to lectures, take the exam and the teacher doesn't even know you. I mean, I don't know how I'd ever get used to something like that'.

Students who are expected to 'get used to something like that' study at EEC. Its student body of 1097 first year students in the academic year 2006/2007 contrasts sharply with DES. To illustrate this, whereas design students compared their 'closeness' to colleagues with their secondary school experiences, Matilda (FG) at the EEC says: 'we were more connected in secondary school...here there are so many people...we're not that connected here because there's so many of us and in secondary school there was a small community'. Danijela (SG, MED) has a similar impression of the engineering faculty: 'these really large groups and the huge number FER [EEC] admits every year, and the system where groups change after every semester isn't good for making closer

---

<sup>44</sup> 'Ti' and 'vi' are personal pronouns in Croatian. The former signals informality and the latter formality.

friendships'<sup>45</sup>. This can be further reinforced with an excerpt from Marko's (FG, EEC) interview: 'I stayed in the same group, but I know a lot of people who had to change groups. I think that's bad. You get to know some people in your group, you go out to lunch, to coffee and then after three or four months, however long a term is, they transfer you'. In other words, whereas the academic environment with regard to group size does not require getting used to by DES students, since it resembles their secondary school experience, EEC students encounter a new social experience, aggravated by changing groups. With regard to collegial ties, the interview extracts suggest that smaller (and unchanging) study groups are more conducive for the development of closer ties with colleagues as a form of social capital. Indeed, such findings conform to Mackie's (2001) research conclusion that the large size and changing members of lectures or seminar groups result in 'superficial rather than supportive friendships' (p.274).

These students' impressions of weaker 'connectedness' to colleagues at EEC also seems to pertain to the teacher-student relationship at this faculty. For example, Petar (FG, EEC) observes how 'professors can't really get to know us because there is a lot of us in groups, 80, 90 and we don't have oral exams'. Similarly, Damir (SG, MAT) who studied at the electrical engineering faculty for a year, makes a distinction between his old and new course. He says:

*It's a much nicer working atmosphere here at PMF [MAT] because there is 300 of us in the first year...whereas at FER [EEC] there was 890 newly enrolled, 100 part-time students, 700 people who were repeating the year and the other 7000 students...actually there was no contact with professors...there was no oral exam...a professor was the person who pressed the left button on the computer mouse for the power point presentation. That's all we knew about the professors.*

These interview extracts suggest that it is difficult to have direct contact with academic staff in large student groups. Indeed, for academic staff to know students' names is certainly more difficult at EEC than it is at DES; and this can arguably have implications for students' sense of institutional commitment and belonging. Thomas's (2002) research findings, for example, showed that students 'seem to be more likely to feel that they are accepted and valued by staff if lecturers and tutors know their names and exhibit other signs of friendship, are interested in their work, and treat students as equals' (p.432). One of the interviewed MED lecturers recognizes this and asks students to wear name tags. She explains:

---

<sup>45</sup> Student groups at the EEC change after each term depending on students' exam results. The student stays in the same group if s/he passes all exams.

I give them a piece of paper and they write, I don't know, Alen K. It has an effect, the fact that you give a person an identity. It raises their engagement, their will to learn, their mood in general.

Although students at the EEC did not seem to have direct contact with their lecturers, all of the interviewed students mentioned that their teachers were largely responsive to communication via e-mail. In other words, it seems that the possibility of e-mail contact can improve teacher-student communication when it is hindered by large group sizes.

According to Bowen et al. (2005), there is a relationship between student attendance and performance/retention; where non-attendance may indicate that a student is experiencing difficulties. Importantly, small group sizes enable informal monitoring of student progress. For example, at DES students mentioned how their teachers notice if someone is not present during lectures. This can arguably contribute to student progress either implicitly (students feel they need to meet teacher expectations) or explicitly (teachers express concern when a student is not meeting expectations). Such progress follow-up might be particularly pertinent for first generation students for whom it may be less 'natural' to complete HE. Unlike DES, large group sizes at EEC or MGO, enable student non-attendance. On the one hand, this is because academic staff may not notice missing students because of group sizes and on the other, colleagues can sign each other in at lectures when there is a requirement to register. In relation to attendance monitoring systems, Bowen et al. (2005) raise the possibility of fellow students recording absent students, which is what was identified in the interviews with EEC and MGO students.

Cartney and Rouse (2006) argue that learning in small groups generally has a positive effect on student progression and retention. However, the authors also recognize cases when small groups can lead to antagonism. Although the Croatian students interviewed largely suggested that small group size was a positive institutional characteristic, two downsides were also identified by two students. The first relates to the admission process and the second to closeness. With regard to the first issue, since DES admits a small number of students among a large number of applicants it is more difficult to gain a place at this faculty in comparison to the other case study faculties. Tanja (SG, EEC), one of the interviewed students, suggested that with regard to access, a small number of successful applicants can be discouraging for potential applicants who might assume they do not have the necessary 'capital' to compete for such limited places. In her interview extract, this capital is 'a connection'. She says: 'it's difficult to get in because they accept very few people and then you need a connection which I don't like'. On the other hand, in relation to

closeness, one of the students at DES described small student numbers as both his faculty's strength and weakness. According to Bartol (SG, DES):

[Small group size] it is *on the one hand really good because we all get to know each other* and on the other really bad because we all get to know each other...when you know someone really well and you spend ten hours a day with them *both the good and the bad characteristics come out. And then there can be tension and arguments.* We all spend a lot of time together, we go out...and there are quarrels...but in lectures it's ok because people are willing to help each other out and I find that important.

To conclude, it was generally suggested in this section that, similarly to the secondary school experience, small and unchanging student groups enable closer contact with colleagues and academic staff. Importantly, it is argued that such contact facilitates informal monitoring of student progress, as well as more intense student engagement with their HE experience. This contention was reinforced by the quoted MED lecturer. In other words, small groups seem to illustrate an inclusive organisational practice shaping institutional habituses. This resonates with Leathwood and O'Connell's (2003) findings which show 'the desire on the part of the vast majority of students for a greater degree of contact with, and support from, teaching staff' (p.610). The following section moves from the quantity of teacher-student communication as influenced by the size of the student body to the quality of such contact.

### *Communicating with teachers*

According to Thomas (2002), 'relationships between students and teaching staff seem to be fundamental to attitudes towards learning and coping with academic difficulties' (p.432). Similarly, Martinez (2001) claims that students who are likely to leave their course early are also more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of teaching and think that they do not have a good relationship with their teachers. Lynch and O'Riordan (1998) find that:

Students who were within college also felt that support from lecturers and tutors was important. They [first generation students] were more reliant on this than students whose families were able to guide and support them (p.466).

The importance of the teacher-student relationship for students' academic experiences was identified in most of the interviews with Croatian students. In particular, the nature of this relationship was addressed in the interviews with regard to general communication with teachers, transmission of course content and assessment.

It was suggested in the previous section that smaller study groups are more conducive to direct communication with academic staff. However, it is not just the nominal possibility of such communication with teachers that matters, but also the actual nature of such communication and in relation to this the interviewed students reported varied experiences across the case study faculties. That is, students gave both positive and negative examples of teachers who contribute to the shaping of their academic environments. Two selected extracts illustrate the different tones:

(1) I think my faculty's great because the people are really...all the professors...irrespective of the fact that it's not technologically well equipped...what is a big plus for me and why I like coming here is that *I feel good here...I know that everyone will help you here.* (Melita, FG, MGO)

(2) The difference between secondary schooling and here is huge. There you had more of a friendly relationship with your teacher and here *it's more hierarchical*. Not with all the teachers, but with most of them...one knows who is the professor and *we [students] are plain good-for-nothings for them.* (Fabijan, FG, MED)

The two excerpts portray two different communication environments. The first one is described as friendly and supportive, whereas the second as 'hierarchical'. Teachers who contribute to a

supportive communication environment are also captured in the following quotes from MAT students: 'here I can come and ask professors if I don't understand something' (Damir, SG, MAT), 'we have a good relationship with assistants and professors, especially with assistants. Like they're not our teachers, as if they are one of us' (Marijana, SG, MAT), 'this is a really well organised faculty and well structured and I think teachers care about us...it's not like how I heard it was at the economics department where...you go to the teacher's office hours and he doesn't appear. Here they tell us all the time to use their office hours' (Sonja, SG, MAT). Similarly, at DES, Katarina (FG) mentions a positive example of teacher-student communication: 'when someone says to you 'I wouldn't want to offend you, but I would do it this way' it's like a shock for me. When someone treats you so kindly you have a feeling...it just feels great'. These interview excerpts capture teachers who contribute to a positive academic environment characterised by accessibility ('I can come and ask professors', 'tell us all the time to use their office hours'), inclusiveness ('as if they are one of us'), support ('everyone will help you here', 'teachers care about us') and respect ('treats you so kindly').

However, students also mentioned teachers whose contribution to the general academic environment was negative. For example, Mladen (SG, MED) says: 'I'm disappointed with the teachers and the relationship...looking down on us. I don't know, I imagined it to be different. After all, these teachers are here for us, but they act special'. Similarly, Rebeka (SG, MED) talks about an annual faculty event when MED students and teachers get together for different sports and entertainment activities and she describes the event as follows: 'it's like they weren't the professors we are usually afraid of...I think a lot of people see these professors as inhuman, like a different species'. Here the vocabulary used to describe certain teachers, such as 'looking down on us' or 'usually afraid of' is negative and contrasts sharply with the positive discourse highlighted in the previous paragraph. The following examples from two FTB students further illustrate such negative communication between academic staff and students:

- (1) The last time I went he shouted at me that he didn't have the time and told me to close the door and I asked him why he was shouting at me as soon as I entered the room? I mean, if you don't have the time say it...I don't have the time, come at a different time. (Lana, FG, FTB)
- (2) The course had just started and he said that if something wasn't clear we should come and see him during his office hours. And then I knocked, totally confused and he told me office hours weren't private lessons. (Eli, SG, FTB)

These interview excerpts are particularly ironic if one compares them to one of the opening lines in the faculty's prospectus which says: 'We at the Faculty will do everything we can to enable the best possible study conditions and to make you feel comfortable in this setting during your course'. Importantly, both of these students at the FTB reported such teacher disinterest and insensitivity as educationally de-motivating.

In addition to the tone in which lecturers respond to students, it is also important to mention the extent to which students feel comfortable approaching their lecturers for help. That is, even though certain lecturers were described as friendly and approachable by students, in general many students did not seem to feel comfortable asking for support. For example, Mili (FG, MAT), who talked favourably about her lecturers, said: 'I don't know, I feel uncomfortable going to their tutorial times...really uncomfortable'. According to Željka (SG, DES), such discomfort can be related to secondary school experiences. She comments positively on her secondary school experience as follows: 'I can see that it helped me a great deal because people from other schools still have that fear in their contact with professors. If you don't know how to communicate with professors, then that's bad. So, my school was great in that sense'. According to Željka, in comparison to private secondary schooling, which she completed and describes as largely consisting of informal teacher-pupil relationships, state secondary schooling is more hierarchical in that respect. In other words, she suggests that secondary school experiences can influence one's HE behaviour both positively and negatively (i.e. feeling (un)comfortable about approaching teachers).

In conclusion, according to Eimers and Pike (1997), the amount and quality of students' interactions with academic staff is shown to be a significant predictor of student persistence. With regard to the amount of students' interactions with academic staff, small group sizes seem to enable more direct teacher-student communication. And in relation to the quality of interactions, the interviews suggested students experience both positive and negative contact with lecturers. Examples of helpful and supportive teachers illustrate inclusive institutional practices shaping institutional habituses, whereas examples of distant and even rude academic staff highlight exclusive practices. Overall, it seems that the interviewed students at the DES, MAT, MGO and EEC are largely satisfied with the quality of communication with teachers, whereas students at the MED and FTB seemed less satisfied.

The following section explores teacher-student interaction with regard to course content transmission. According to Thomas (2002), assumed knowledge and language of instruction are two ways in which teachers can favour students from more privileged backgrounds. And indeed, this issue was recognized and discussed in the chapter on cultural capital where it was concluded that students who attended vocational schooling (who tend to be first generation students) experience a more difficult time in their first year of studies because certain teachers assume grammar school knowledge. This section further discusses the assumption of prior knowledge, as well as clarity of transmission, students' perceived relevance of transmitted content and constructions of course difficulty. It is suggested that each of these identified themes shape students' educational experiences in a way that reinforces social disparities.

The issue of how accommodating teachers are to their students' varying levels of academic preparedness was particularly raised in the conducted interviews with regard to mathematics, which is an obligatory subject at five out of the six case study faculties. Indeed, since mathematics is a compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum, teachers seem to assume prior knowledge. However, the interviews generally suggested that students have different levels of mathematics knowledge and in particular students with completed vocational and art schooling seem less well prepared in comparison to their colleagues with completed grammar school education (especially mathematics grammar schools). To illustrate this, three of the interviewed students from the EEC mentioned mathematics as contributing to their unsatisfactory progress and all three students attributed this to not having a good mathematics background from secondary schooling. Two of these students had completed vocational schooling and one student a private sports grammar school. Difficulties with mathematics for pupils whose secondary school basis was not strong in this particular subject also came across in the interviews with DES, FTB and MGO students. For instance, Ružica (SG, MGO), who completed a language grammar school said: 'I've given up on maths. I couldn't follow the lectures. I come to the lectures and I can't follow. I get lost. I don't even get to copy the first task and we're already on the third'. Like many other students, Ružica explains this with her poor secondary school foundations in maths. In addition, she mentions that: 'a lot of people from my faculty took private lessons in maths'. In other words, students with lower levels of educational capital from secondary schooling might need to invest economic capital in order to meet course requirements. One of Thomas's (2002)

research conclusions captures well the general tone of the Croatian student interviews with regard to assumed knowledge:

The students felt that it was important that teaching staff did not make assumptions about previous educational knowledge, but rather were aware that students had entered higher education via a range of routes and from different backgrounds and thus had different bodies of knowledge, experience and skills (p.10).

Assumptions that lecturers make about their students' knowledge can be illustrated with an excerpt from an interview with a MAT lecturer who said:

We get kids who attended what used to be called MIOC or the fifth grammar school. The fifth grammar school is a science-maths school. That's our natural target group, the pool from which they come.

Clarity of course content transmission is one way in which academic staff can reinforce differences in prior knowledge between students. In this sense, students mentioned teachers who explain content clearly and in an interesting manner, as well as those who do not. These differences are captured in the following selected quotes: 'our teachers know how to explain things, they know their job well' (Jelena, FG, EEC), 'I think teachers should make an effort to make the lecture interesting so that students listen, so that they want to come again, so that they understand and not for him to just regurgitate stuff just for the sake of saying something and leaving as soon as possible. This has been a disappointment for me.' (Mladen, SG, MED), 'I took x [subject] with a teacher who was really bad at explaining, I didn't know anything...but now I have understood everything with a different professor and have passed the exam' (Lovro, FG, FTB). This last quote is particularly illustrative of the importance academic staff can have for student progress. In addition, Mladen's emphasis on 'interesting lectures' resonates with Finnocchietti's (2004) research which showed that:

Students also consider it essential to be able to hold their interest, a quality considered to be more important than any other regarding the relations between students and teachers (p.466).

In relation to teaching skills, the interviewed lecturers raised a lack of institutional support with regard to their professional development. For example, an EEC lecturer said: 'There are people who know how to teach and there are people who are experts but don't know how to teach. I

think this problem should be addressed at a higher level, organising workshops on teaching skills'. Similarly, a MED lecturer notes: 'I have been educated how to treat people, not how to teach students. Somehow people think that teaching is a natural talent'. The excerpts suggest that lecturers also need institutional support in order to improve their teaching skills.

Apart from assumed knowledge and clarity of content transmission, a contributing factor to students' attitudes towards particular subjects relates to their perception of how useful a subject is for their future occupation. For example, DES students did not understand the utility of the mathematics subject for their future profession. Bartol (SG, DES) says: 'this is the only faculty in the world, we haven't found another faculty in the world where you study graphic design and where you have courses like maths and geometry, it's unbelievable'. Martin (FG, DES) is slightly more optimistic about geometry, but equally critical of maths: 'maybe we're going to need geometry because of space, but maths is not useful for anyone. But I guess this is because architects founded the course and the entrance exam at the architecture department has maths, so I guess it's because of that'. Interestingly, although these two subjects were the only ones flagged by the interviewed design students as irrelevant, it seems that they are also the most difficult to pass. In relation to this, Bartol (SG, DES) observes: 'these are the only two subjects which aren't taught by teachers from this faculty, but rather architecture and they're a bit strict ...but if you pass these two subjects, you've passed everything else'.

The importance of understanding the practical applicability of the course content transmitted was raised by several of the interviewed students across the case study faculties. For instance, what Mathea (SG, DES) particularly liked about her second year of studies was a more focused curriculum. She said:

You're doing exactly what you like. In the first year we did what we were interested in and what we weren't...I think it's going to be easier in this year because I have subjects that I really need and which relate to what I plan on doing in the future.

This is a point also raised by Bartol (SG) at the same faculty who comments on his second year of study as follows: 'I like that we have become more focused, it's not as general as it used to be and I like that we don't have any more irrelevant subjects'. Similarly to Mathea and Bartol, Fabijan (FG, MED) would like his first year medical course to have more 'clinical' subjects. Fabijan says: 'there's too much preclinical stuff. Maybe that's how it's supposed to be, six years is a lot after all...and maybe we should start with that...but still I'd like if there was more clinical

stuff. This is somehow dry...I'm studying things without seeing them'. In this context, it seems important that students receive information on the structure of the course and the importance of the taught subjects.

A further factor which appears to shape students' educational experiences and is connected to course content refers to its volume. In relation to this, the interviewed students suggested that distinctions could be observed between faculties. More specifically, across the case study faculties, MED students seem to have the largest workload, whereas MGO students the lowest. For example, Fabijan (FG, MED) says: 'I can't believe when someone from the economics faculty says 'oh I have 500 pages, it's the most difficult exam in the year. For us, 500 pages is normal'. Tea (SG, MED) makes a similar point:

You study, you study, you study and then you don't know...and then again...it's training your nerves. And then you see how at other faculties people don't know what to do with themselves, they're bored. And you feel as if you should enrol into something else, to save your health, your nerves...but then when that passes...you think, I'll stay...it's always a phase in the middle of anatomy or other difficult courses...that you think you'll give up...but it depends on every individual, how determined they are.

In other words, for Tea (SG, MED), the decision to leave the medical course is connected to coping with its intensity. Students from other faculties also recognised the workload of the medical course. For example, Tanja (SG, EEC) comments: 'I don't know whether I'd be prepared to study and work as much as they do' and Mili (FG, MAT) describes MED students as 'they have to study all the time and they can't forget anything and they have to learn a lot of things'. In addition, the intensity of the MED course is also linked to course length. Filip's (SG, MAT) first association with MED was 'it lasts for a very long time' and for Andrej (SG, MGO) 'the first thing that comes to mind is that it's tiring, difficult, six years and then after that ten years to specialize, no thanks'.

In comparison to the reported workload at MED, MGO students did not describe their courses as difficult. As an illustration, Ružica (SG), who does not enrol into the second year, says:

Even though I haven't passed any exams, *I don't think this is a difficult course*...that you have to kill yourself studying...a lot of people say oh a technical faculty, it must be difficult...you have maths, physics, chemistry...and *I mean you have to study, you can't finish anything without some effort, you have to*

*work and study, but I don't think it's difficult* so that I would say that people give up their course because it is difficult.

Interestingly, unlike the interviewed MED students who related course progress to the ability to acquire substantial amounts of material by rote learning, Ružica does not associate course progress with the difficulty of the course. In fact, she partially relates her non-enrolment to her faculty's 'laissez faire' approach towards students and expects the new faculty she has decided to enrol into to be better for her since: 'I need someone who will encourage me, push me'. Judging by the interviews given by students from the MED and MGO, it seems that the most academically conducive, yet also humane institutional environment is a mid-point between a 'nerve training' approach and a 'laissez faire' approach.

Apart from MED which was described as a 'difficult' course, MAT and DES students also described their first undergraduate year as difficult. However, the responses from students at these faculties indicated different types of difficulty. For example, at MAT, students related difficulty to problem solving and consistency, rather than volume of content and rote learning (which was highlighted by medical students), whereas at DES it was related to having a lot of subjects, both theoretical and practical. To illustrate the difficulty at MAT, according to Filip (SG, MAT) 'there isn't a lot to prepare, but you have to understand it. It's not like there is a countless number of definitions you need to learn'. Certain students relate such understanding to a natural aptitude for mathematics, but also consistency in work. As an illustration of the natural aptitude argument, Ružica (SG, MGO) says: 'I think MAT is for people who have a knack for mathematics and I think some people are just born with this'. And with regard to consistency, Mili (FG, MAT) says: 'things build up on top of each other ...so if I don't work consistently I notice that I cannot follow what the teacher is saying'. Similarly, Filip (SG, MAT) comments: 'there's a lot you can't get because as soon as there is something you don't understand you're already late. You're running late if you don't get it immediately, and it's difficult to get it immediately when you see something for the first time'.

This impression of the MAT course as difficult was also recognised by some of the interviewed students from the other case study faculties. For example, Bartol (SG, DES) says: 'I've heard it's a difficult faculty...I know they have a problem every year because very few people enrol because it's a difficult faculty...no one wants to study that' and Martin's (FG, DES) impression is that there is 'a lot of studying'. Bartol's excerpt suggests such constructions of courses as easy or difficult can also shape students' choice of course. To illustrate this, Ružica (SG, MGO) says

about the DES: 'if it wasn't that difficult maybe I would go there. I like it, I really like it but I don't like that you have to work a lot, study. I have a neighbour who studies there and last year she just studied all day, all night, it wasn't normal. Whenever I would phone for us to meet up...I didn't see her for an entire year. I can't, I can't, I'm studying. And at the end I found out from her roommate that she was taking pills for concentration, against sleeping.' The following extracts illustrate this course difficulty point further:

(1) Tea (SG, MED): They [parents] advised me against medicine...told me not to take such a difficult route in life, to take something easier.

(2) Lovro (FG, FTB): My dad told me to enrol into traffic engineering. He said I would complete that...that it was easy.

Although these students enrolled into their courses irrespective of their parents' advice, what is interesting to note is how parents' perceptions of course difficulty shapes the advice they give to their children.

Furthermore, the following extract from an interview with Mili (FG), a MAT student, illustrates how teachers can de-motivate their students by reinforcing their perceptions of difficulty. Mili says:

The first week was catastrophic...because professors came in and scared us...this is a serious faculty, it's difficult, you'll have to work a lot...as if we're not for maths.

According to Quinn et al. (2005), one of the explanatory factors for course non-completion is students' perceptions of their course as being too hard. Similarly, Rhodes and Nevill (2004) suggest that self-esteem has been found to be a significant determinant of student motivation and that poor motivation 'has been shown to contribute to poor academic performance promoting premature student exit' (p.190). In this sense, teachers' reinforcement of course difficulty as mentioned by Mili can also have a negative effect on course progress. An important point in relation to this is made by Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) who identify confidence in ability as contributing to struggles with the university experience and who identify a gender aspect to it: according to the authors, women students 'struggle with feelings of a lack of confidence in their abilities or performance' (p.608). Mili is an example of such a woman in this study.

Contrary to MAT, DES students relate course difficulty primarily to the number of subjects they have to pass. Among the case study faculties DES students have the highest number of subjects and this requires them to be at their faculty for most of the working week in their first year. For example, according to Martin (FG, DES) 'the tempo here is really fast, tiring and stressful because we don't have any time to ourselves. We spend all day long at the faculty, in lectures...sometimes we don't sleep for two days'. Similarly, Katarina (FG, DES) says: 'You wake up in the morning, go to the faculty, come home, study and go to sleep. The same from one day to the next'.

This is a difference to, for example, EEC or MAT students who spend four hours every day at the faculty. Mathea (FG, EEC) sees this faculty practice as positive: 'I'm happy I don't have to be at the faculty all day long. If I had lectures from 10-1 and then from 17-19, and gaps in between...it's great that one week I am there from 8-12 and the next from 16-18 or 14-18'. In other words, the electrical engineering course is organised to enable students to have a balance between their academic and private lives, which does not seem to be the case with DES. As Bartol (SG, DES) notes: 'we have thirteen subjects, whereas law has four and FER [EEC] five'. According to Martin (FG, DES) people who drop out of their course are those who cannot cope with its 'tempo'. For students who have to work to be able to cover the costs of their study, such intense courses do not seem to be a feasible option. However, certain DES students did mention that the second year was less intense than the first. Katarina (FG, DES) says: 'last year was so intense, awful. But this new timetable is much easier, there is more time for other things beside the faculty'. The interview extracts resonate with Galland and Oberti's (2000) observation that 'university classes structure the week for most students' (p.110).

The aim of this section has been to illustrate different aspects of course content transmission which shape students' educational experiences. It is suggested that inclusive practices with regard to content transmission are represented by teachers who do not make assumptions about students' prior knowledge, who transmit content in a clear manner, as well as explain content relevance and who are encouraging with regard to course difficulty. These teachers contribute to a supportive academic environment. On the other hand, teachers who assume prior knowledge, whose lectures are not clear and who reinforce students' insecurities with regard to course difficulty contribute to a discouraging academic setting. It is suggested that the negative repercussions of such a setting can weigh more heavily on students who did not have the privilege of attending a good secondary school, as well as those who are new to the HE

experience, i.e. first generation students. The following section discusses assessment as a further site for teacher-student interaction which shapes student experiences.

### *Assessment*

With regard to assessment, the main theme that emerged from student interviews relates to type of assessment (i.e. written or oral) and the ways in which it can influence teacher objectivity/subjectivity. Out of the six case study faculties, three had only written exams in the first year (FTB, EEC and MGO), whereas three had both written and oral exams (MED, MAT and DES).

At faculties where students had only written exams no teacher subjectivity in marking was mentioned. Students' perceptions of objective evaluation through written exams are illustrated in the following two extracts from interviews with EEC students: 'people get grades here on the basis of how much they know...we're being graded by computers, we all have the same questions...we're all the same' (Marko, FG, EEC), 'sometimes I am sorry we don't have oral exams because I have heard that you can get a higher mark at oral exams. But then, that can sometimes depend on the mood of the professor, whereas here it's all black and white. Actually I think it's better we don't have oral exams' (Tanja, SG, EEC). In other words, these two students leave the impression that grades obtained through written exams are knowledge based and that the same criteria applies to everyone. Such student reports are similar to Thomas's (2002) research findings which showed that, with regard to assessment, 'success was seen to be within the grasp of all students (as long as they put the work in), and that cultural capital (such as language, style and other symbols) does not dominate the assessment process' (p.434). According to the Croatian students interviewed, written exams at the case study faculties did not include essay type questions, but rather multiple-choice questions, i.e. the form of the written exams was also identified as contributing to grading objectivity. This is especially pertinent since exams are usually marked by only one teacher.

In opposition to reported objectivity at the three faculties which do not have oral exams, students at the three faculties which do have oral exams reported negative experiences. For example, MED students commented on oral exams as follows: 'there was this one time when everyone failed at this teacher's exam irrespective of how much they knew. And you go to another teacher and you know you won't fail' (Tea, SG, MED); 'I got an A just because I got this one professor. I

could have gotten a lower mark if I had gone to someone else...teachers do not have consistent criteria for oral exams...they do for written, but not oral...you cannot believe the oscillations...I can understand that everyone has a subjective feeling when you enter that room and when they see you, but it should be more objective and there should be clearer standards.' (Danijela, SG, MED); 'I ended up with this notorious professor who sat down and blew smoke into my face and laughed when I'd answer...I think so much depends on luck' (Mladen, SG, MED). This subjectivity aspect of assessment is also mentioned by Damir (SG) who had transferred to MAT from the EEC: 'as far as organisation, teachers and other things I have nothing to complain about. Apart from the oral exams...FER [EEC] was more objective in this respect because a computer would mark our exams. Here, I think these oral exams are a minus. I don't like such subjectivity'. What these excerpts show is that grades for certain oral exams are not based on objective, but rather subjective criteria. In fact, unlike their colleagues at faculties which do not have oral exams (for whom knowledge was the identified criteria for obtaining a grade), the students who had experiences of oral exams suggested that such exams were a site for basing student grades on random criteria. These included the mood of the lecturer, but also social criteria such as attended secondary schooling or gender.

Examples of teachers privileging grammar school pupils at oral exams are illustrative of the expressive characteristics which shape different institutional habituses. Teacher bias at oral exams has already been discussed in the chapter on cultural capital. However, to reiterate, type of secondary schooling was identified by students at MED and MAT as one of the criteria on the basis of which some students were favoured over others when they took particular oral exams. More specifically, teachers were recognised as being biased against students with completed vocational schooling. For example, according to Rebeka (SG, MED), 'there's prejudice that if you come from a medical school [type of vocational school] you're not as good'. Importantly, since individuals with completed vocational schooling are more likely to be first generation students, in cases where teachers do sanction students for not having completed the 'appropriate' secondary school, they are more likely to be sanctioning first generation students. This is different to Cooke et al.'s (2004) findings from the UK context which suggested that their sample of disadvantaged students did not perceive any bias from staff.

Although completed secondary schooling was not mentioned by any of the interviewed design students as biasing teachers in favour of some students over others, students at that faculty identified gender as contributing to subjectivity in marking. To illustrate this, Mathea (SG, DES)

says: 'in some subjects you can see that teachers have their favourites...you can see it in certain subjects because of girls. I mean, they may not have done anything special, but the teacher likes them or thinks they're beautiful or something'. Martin (FG, DES) also notices that 'last year in our group...I had a feeling that one of the teachers, he would pay more attention to the girls and give them better grades'. However, according to Mathea, this subjectivity can also be biased in favour of men: 'but it's an advantage if you're a guy with the female teachers'. For McDonaugh (1996), institutional habitus encompasses the influence of class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation. In the quoted interviews we can also observe the influence of gender.

What these interview excerpts suggest is that oral exams are more conducive to teacher subjectivity in marking which can reinforce social disadvantages. To this extent, the interviews generally suggested that students favoured written exams.

#### *Faculty resources and organisation*

Judging by student interviews, among the six case study faculties only two are well resourced: EEC and MAT. With regard to the former, just as a distinctive feature of DES is its size and focus on 'creativity', or at MED on 'determination' and 'rote learning', what seems to be distinct about EEC and MAT is how well they are organised and resourced. Importantly, study materials for these two faculties are made available on the internet which is an important inclusive practice; as Thomas (2002) observes, lack of resources is 'likely to have greater impact on low-income students' (p.434). The importance of faculty resources for students from low-income families is also mentioned by Lynch and O'Riordan (1998) who found that:

Working-class students from low-income families who were in college had to rely heavily on college facilities, such as libraries, computers, photocopying, crèches etc. If college facilities were overcrowded, they suffered (p.467).

The satisfactory organisational aspects of EEC can be illustrated with the following extracts: 'it's well organised...really...we know on time about exams and there's no...if they say something will happen on that day it happens...you don't have a situation where an exam is set for a particular day and then no one appears' (Tanja, SG, EEC). Nino (SG, EEC) also talks about this aspect of studying: 'the organisation is the best...when a student is enrolled we get our email address...and it's assumed that you follow it and you use it'. Martin (FG, DES), describes EEC

as follows: 'they're the most organised. I like that' and similarly, Ružica (SG, MGO) says: 'they have the most developed technology of all the faculties'. Such extracts also resonate with reports from MAT students: 'everything works through the internet, everything. All notifications, lectures, a forum where people solve equations, results of exams, everything is on the internet' (Mili, FG, MAT); 'we have a good timetable ...we don't have any long breaks between lessons. Always in the morning' (Marijana, FG, MAT). Such organisational practices make studying easier for students who have part-time work commitments.

In comparison to the two well resourced faculties, students at the other case study faculties were dissatisfied with their faculty's organisation and resources. For example, DES students were dissatisfied with the lack of internet communication, as well as costs of study materials. As one student observes 'since I am from [town]...what I like about FER [EEC] is that they have all the latest information on the internet, whereas here at the Design school...I look at the internet, there is no new information' (Mathea, SG, DES). According to Bartol (SG, DES), 'it isn't well equipped for our needs, we have computers which are five years old...I've been to some other faculties, for example economics is extremely well equipped...all new'. Similarly, Željka (SG, DES) notes: 'I'm annoyed we don't have a printer. We have a project now and we have to take it to a photocopying service where we pay a lot of money, instead of the faculty getting a printer'. Lack of information on the internet disadvantages students who have to travel far from home to their faculties for basic information, whereas lack of institutional equipment disadvantages students who lack the financial resources to cover study materials. Interestingly, unlike DES students who identified necessary resources in terms of computers and special materials for product design, at MED students related faculty equipment to corpses. To illustrate this, for Mladen (SG, MED) the faculty is not well equipped because 'we don't have corpses. They're so old...we got the last corpse in the 1970s and generations have been working on it'. This example illustrates how apart from the necessary 'generic' faculty resources (e.g. books, articles, internet access), there are also faculty specific resources required by students which shape the quality of course provision.

Similarly to DES, FTB students complained in their interviews about the lack of information provided by their faculty. For example, Lovro (FG, FTB) says: 'if you find out about something you find out at the last moment...it's not like it nicely says it somewhere, for them to meet you half way, you have to look for everything yourself...I don't like the organisation at all'. Similarly, Eli (SG, FTB) reports that 'they don't inform us about anything. You have to find out about

everything in passing from other students...and the ladies in the student office aren't too nice either'. And Fran (FG, FTB) says:

No one has any understanding for us students. I think we should have more rights. For example, we asked them to allow us to retake the exam once more in the semester, but the dean has changed, the vice-dean, and then they send us from one door to the next. You spend half a day walking back and forth and then they tell you to come back in two days.

In other words, these student extracts suggest that what students receive from the department is lectures, but insufficient further institutional support is provided. Lovro's (FG, FTB) impression is that the faculty tries to copy what is being done at EEC, but that this copying is unsuccessful: 'they've done an excellent job there and our faculty is trying to imitate it but we're nowhere near them'. Such lack of organisation was also mentioned by MGO students. For example, Andrej (SG, MGO) mentions that information is not available on the internet, so similarly to FTB student reports, MGO students find out information at the last moment.

This section has identified differences between case study faculties with regard to how well they are resourced and organised. It is suggested that well-resourced faculties do not only enable better quality of educational provision but also ease the institutional costs of studying.

### *Educational status*

In the previous chapter, it was suggested that the University of Zagreb occupies a dominant position in the Croatian HE field. Furthermore, examples were given of how recognition of such institutional 'prestige' contributes to students' university choices. However, this educational status aspect of institutional habitus can also be identified in the conducted interviews with regard to the case study faculties. Indeed, the findings conform to Baker and Brown's (2007) conclusion that 'the esteem in which the various departments and courses were held by participants was variable. For some it was a matter not just of choosing a "proper" university, but also gaining access to a course that was equally prestigious' (p.384).

To illustrate this, MED was described by students as 'elite'. This elitism was referred to in terms of the social profile of the student body, as well as the social status attributed to doctors. For example, Lovro (FG, FTB) describes medical students as follows: 'they have a lot of

money...everyone's mum is a lawyer or doctor and fathers too'. According to Rebeka (SG) who is a medical student:

People think it's an elite faculty, but I don't know why... it's surely not elite for you to sleep five hours before an exam, maybe because of the status you have later.

In other words, what students recognize is the symbolic capital accorded to the medical profession which positions medical students in a more socially dominant position in relation to those whose occupation does not have such symbolic capital. This issue of social status upon course completion is also mentioned in Danijela's (SG, MED) interview: 'We live in a country where if you have dr. med. in front of your surname, it means something...there are people who decided to study medicine because their parents are doctors, then those who want to improve their social status. I categorize myself in the last group of people who are really interested in it'. Danijela's interview extract suggests that the prestige of the medical profession ('improve their social status') can influence choice of course. This is what Baker and Brown (2007) had also identified in their research study. However, this 'elite' status can also act as a deterrent. Ružica (SG, MGO) comments on the MED course as follows: 'medicine...oh, I don't like medicine, maybe it's stupid of me but I see it as an elite faculty'. In other words, whereas the 'elitism' associated with MED can be a motivating factor for some students, for others it might have the opposite effect, i.e. students avoid the faculty. Such findings resonate with Reay et al.'s (2005) discussion of how students from a working class background identify Oxbridge as 'not for the likes of us'.

The image enjoyed by EEC is similar to that of MED, i.e. that of a prestigious institution. However, unlike the elitism of MED which is socially marked (well-educated parents, status in society), at EEC this prestige is institutional. According to Mili (FG, MAT), 'I think FER is the most respected faculty in Croatia. When one mentions FER everyone is like wow'. Student interviews suggest that the faculty is respected because of how well it is organised and equipped, as well as the job opportunities it offers. In this sense, the negative imagery associated with MED 'elitism' was not mentioned in any of the student interviews which touched upon the status of the EEC.

In comparison to the 'prestigious' institutional imagery associated with MED and EEC, institutions such as FTB, as well as MGO seem to have lower educational status. A contributing factor to this is that the institutional imagery connected to these faculties is less clear. In the case

of MGO, this can be captured in the following quotes: 'I don't know anyone from that faculty, I don't even know where it is' (Bartol, SG, DES) or 'I don't even know that it exists' (Danijela, SG, MED). Similarly, when I asked Petar at the EEC what he would say if someone asked him about the MGO, he said that he would ask what that was. These extracts also resemble students' impressions of FTB: 'I don't know what that is' (Martin, FG, DES), 'second choice faculty' (Tanja, SG, EEC), 'my first association is what do you do after? What is your profession?' (Fabijan, FG, MED), 'I think it's a good faculty all in all...here you have people who got a second chance if they didn't get into biology or medicine, so they go there' (Danijela, SG, MED). In other words, the FTB is largely seen by these students as a second choice faculty with unclear career options.

Hierarchy of course choice, as captured in the administered questionnaire, can also suggest a difference in the educational status of the case study faculties. The results of the Kruskal Wallis test suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between faculties based on how their students rank their enrolled course ( $\chi^2(6, N = 639) = 178.017, p < .001$ ). More specifically, students' responses to the question 'Was this course your first, second or third choice?' (see Table 10.2) show that MED and EEC courses were first choices for the majority of students (96.2% and 92.4% respectively). On the other hand, frequency counts show that for the majority of FTB students (59.5%), the enrolled course was their second choice. Similarly, MGO courses were second choices for 40 per cent of the students who responded to the questionnaire. These findings conform to the impression given by the student interviews with regard to the different educational statuses of the case study faculties.

Table 10.2 Distribution of faculties based on whether their course was a first, second or third choice for enrolled students.

			Hierarchy of course choice.			Total
			First choice	Second choice	Third choice	
Faculty	DES	Count	31	2	0	33
		% within faculty	93.9%	6.1%	.0%	100.0%
	MED	Count	179	6	1	186
		% within faculty	96.2%	3.2%	.5%	100.0%
	MAT	Count	68	17	0	85
		% within faculty	80.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%
	MGO	Count	41	32	7	80
		% within faculty	51.3%	40.0%	8.8%	100.0%
	FTB	Count	33	50	1	84
		% within faculty	39.3%	59.5%	1.2%	100.0%
	EEC	Count	158	13	0	171
		% within faculty	92.4%	7.6%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	510	120	9	639
		% within faculty	79.8%	18.8%	1.4%	100.0%

A further indication of the educational status of the selected faculties can be observed in relation to students' answers with regard to their motivation to study: one of the questionnaire items examined the percentage of students for whom 'obtaining high social status' was a reason to choose the enrolled course. The results of the Kruskal Wallis test suggest that there is a difference between faculties based on students' responses to this item ( $\chi^2(6, N = 642) = 16.504$ ,  $p=.011$ ). Table 10.3 below shows that the highest number of students who indicated this option studied at EEC (32.7%) and MED (26.7%). And indeed, these case study faculties were also classified as 'prestigious' in the student interviews. On the other hand, in comparison to these two faculties, the 'high social status' option was indicated by a lower percentage of FTB (19%) and MGO (18.5%) students. This again reinforces findings from the student interviews which suggested that these two case study faculties enjoyed less educational status than the two 'prestigious' faculties.

Table 10.3 Distribution of faculties based on whether their students recognise their enrolled course as giving them high social status.

giving them high social status.

			High social status influence on choice of course.		Total
			No	Yes	
Faculty	DES	Count	31	2	33
		% within faculty	93.9%	6.1%	100.0%
	MED	Count	137	50	187
		% within faculty	73.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	MAT	Count	65	21	86
		% within faculty	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%
	MGO	Count	66	15	81
		% within faculty	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
	FTB	Count	68	16	84
		% within faculty	81.0%	19.0%	100.0%
	EEC	Count	115	56	171
		% within faculty	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	482	160	642
		% within faculty	75.1%	24.9%	100.0%

To conclude, student interviews and questionnaire answers suggest that MED and EEC have higher educational status than the other case study faculties and in particular the FTB and MGO. That is, the former two case study faculties were described by many students as ‘prestigious’, they are both first choice faculties for the majority of their student body and in comparison to the other faculties, a higher percentage of students associated their enrolled courses at these faculties with ‘high social status’. Although such institutional prestige may be a motivating factor for some students, it was also suggested that a distinction needs to be made between prestige constructed on the basis of institutional factors and prestige constructed on the basis of social factors (e.g. social profile of the student body); the latter was identified as a discouraging factor for students who feel they would not fit in.

### *Student characteristics*

Apart from curriculum offer, organisational practices and educational status, Reay et al. (2005) also mention cultural and expressive characteristics as constituting institutional habitus. The authors suggest that this aspect of institutional habitus is embodied in the ‘collectivity of students, in their dress, demeanour and stances’ (p.37). Such characteristics of institutional habitus have previously been touched upon in the chapter on social capital. For example, it was argued that certain social boundaries (as related to regional membership, economic capital and gender) can shape collegial ties and therefore the educational benefits they render. This section further

discusses student characteristics. It examines the social profile of the student body at the six case study faculties, as well as its non-social aspects as identified by the interviewed students.

Parents' educational level and economic status are taken here as an indication of the social profile of the student body. With regard to parents' educational level, according to questionnaire results the majority of students across the case study faculties are second generation students (64%). However, results of the Kruskal Wallis test suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between faculties based on the educational level of their students' parents ( $\chi^2(6, N = 642) = 21.057, p=.002$ ). Frequency counts (see Table 10.4) show that a higher percentage of DES and MED students are second generation students (69.7% and 74.9% respectively). Second generation students also form the majority at the EEC (61.4%) and MGO (59.3%). A slightly lower percentage of second generation students forms the majority at MAT (55.8%) and FTB (51.2%).

Table 10.4 Distribution of students by parents' educational level across faculties.

			Students by parents educational level			Total
			Missing	First generation	Second generation	
Faculty	DES	Count	2	8	23	33
		% within faculty	6.1%	24.2%	69.7%	100.0%
	MED	Count	0	47	140	187
		% within faculty	.0%	25.1%	74.9%	100.0%
	MAT	Count	1	37	48	86
		% within faculty	1.2%	43.0%	55.8%	100.0%
	MGO	Count	0	33	48	81
		% within faculty	.0%	40.7%	59.3%	100.0%
	FTB	Count	3	38	43	84
		% within faculty	3.6%	45.2%	51.2%	100.0%
	EEC	Count	1	65	105	171
		% within faculty	.6%	38%	61.4%	100.0%
	Total		Count	7	228	407
			% within faculty	1.1%	35.5%	63.4%
						100.0%

In relation to students' estimations of their family's economic status, overall frequency counts show that a high percentage of students estimated their family's income as 'good' (43.7%) or 'very good' (4.2%). In addition, 45.7 per cent indicated their family's income as 'average'. Only 5.6 per cent of students reported their family's income as 'bad' and just five people out of 642 (0.8%) indicated their family's income was 'very bad'. In other words, both with regard to parents' educational level and economic status student answers suggest that this is a socio-economically relatively privileged cohort of students. However, although out of the 28 students interviewed, several students mentioned noticing economic distinctions between students, only

one person talked about herself as an outsider at her faculty in this 'social' respect. Katarina's experiences of non-belonging have been previously discussed in Chapter 7. Indeed, the generalised comments students made about their colleagues and students from other faculties indicate that dominant stereotypical representations of the 'type' of person studying at particular faculties are related to youth cultures and gender rather than class. For example, distinctive features of DES mentioned both by the students from that institution and other students included 'creativity' and 'alternative'. Tea (SG, MED) describes DES students as 'artists with their fixed ideas, creative' and Danijela (SG, MED) as 'that's where alternative people go. I have a good friend there and he's always listening to demo-bands, they go to Ljubljana to some alternative design exhibitions and stuff like that'. Bartol (SG, DES) reinforces this impression students have by describing himself and his colleagues as 'urban alternative'. Drawing on the stereotypical visual identities of design students, Mathea (SG, DES) suggests that people wearing 'trendy' clothes or women in high heels might feel 'out of place' at the DES.

On the other hand, unlike the dominant 'alternative' imagery associated with DES, the predominant MED imagery is 'academic'. More specifically, medical students were described as determined and hard working. According to a MED lecturer, studying medicine requires determination and the ability to learn large amounts of theory:

*Who studies medicine? Those people who aren't talented, you don't have a talent for anything. You're determined, but not talented. They don't know how to sing, how to draw, how to jump...but they are determined...they have to cover, I think they cover the largest amount of theoretical content in the university in general...these are hundreds of thousands of pages that you need to shove down yourself. They're extremely determined, which is an excellent quality for a doctor.*

This lecturer's image of medical students as determined is also reiterated by MED students themselves. For example, Tea (SG, MED) describes her study experiences as follows: 'if you get through the first year it means you're really determined...they force you into such a tight schedule here. You need so many nerves for this, you become trained. And if you manage to get through the first two years, you're already trained and it becomes normal to push on, give it all you have, have a plan night and day'. For Danijela (SG, MED), the first year is what she calls 'the elimination' year because it shows who has the determination to withhold such pressure. In this context, students who feel 'different' describe themselves as being less ambitious and as having a private life.

Distinct stereotypes related to the student body were particularly prominent for students at the EEC. These came up in extracts such as: 'they're not nerdy as much as they are intellectual, they're interested in it' (Mathea, SG, DES), 'apparently really intelligent people go there who are good at maths and physics and you need to be really smart because you can't learn it all by heart' (Rebeka, SG, MED), 'I think people at FER are very intelligent. When I hear FER I immediately think of intelligent people...you need to have a knack for maths'. In other words, electrical engineering and computing is described as a course for 'intelligent' students. That is, for students who are 'naturally' good at problem-solving, rather than students who 'can learn it all by heart'. Such images of naturally gifted students studying at the EEC are also similar to descriptions of students at MAT. A MAT lecturer comments that:

People who come here or think about this course are those who are inclined to very formal and abstract thinking. It wouldn't be good to get into an argument with them because they would use formal arguments...now whether this is reflected in, well it's pretentious to say, a character trait, could be explored.

There are also stereotypical visual images of EEC students. These are captured in excerpts such as: 'hoards of men with long hair who play bass guitars and spend their breaks in the entrance with their lap tops downloading games' (Damir, SG, MAT), 'there are a lot of glasses there, whenever I go there...it's all men and they all wear glasses' (Eli, SG, FTB). In other words, the dominant images associated with this faculty include intelligence, computer 'geeks' and men. 'Difference' is constructed in this context as not being 'naturally gifted' for problem solving, but rather as being hard-working, as well as having interests beside computer games. Difference is also gendered, i.e. being a woman. For example, a female student at the EEC noted in her questionnaire that she was an atypical student because she was 'the wrong sex'. This is another example of the gender aspect of institutional habitus.

Unlike the images of creative and alternative design students, determined medical students or intelligent electrical engineering and mathematics students, the institutional imagery associated with the FTB, as well as the MGO is less clear. This can be accounted for by the fact that many of the students from the other faculties did not know about these two institutions. However, judging by comments given by students who did associate particular images with the student body at these faculties, there is a predominant gender imagery associated with them. That is, FTB is identified as a 'female' faculty, whereas MGO as 'male'. In addition, women at the former faculty were described by a female student from the MGO faculty as: 'they all wear trendy clothes

at that faculty. It's all women and a gay guy...really, I'm not making this up...they're all made up...ok, I have make up on now too, but they are really made up, hairstyles, bags, tops, skirts, ballet shoes, you know, stuff like that...I don't feel comfortable in such company'. Similar associations between women's visual appearance and faculties were also mentioned by other students. For example, Mili (FG, MAT) says: 'It's typical that if you see a girl who is better dressed you will think she studies business or law. And if it's some alternative girl, you'll conclude she's from the humanities'. Similarly, a MAT lecturer notices that 'our female students are not specially made up' and an EEC lecturer makes the same observation for the female students at her faculty. In other words, there does not only seem to be a difference between faculties with regard to its gender profile, but students also identify a difference between 'type' of women and men who attend particular faculties. According to Melita (FG, MGO): 'I could never study law or business...I have a feeling that people at these faculties are all acting and pretending...I see such women in high heels and she looks great...but if she wants to run she can't. Her priority is obviously to look good rather than feel comfortable'.

To further this point about intra-gender differences, Mathea (SG, DES) says: 'I don't think that guys who would go to FER would consider that [MGO]'. Indeed, whereas male EEC students were stereotypically described as wearing glasses, i.e. there is a suggestion that they are 'geeks', Mladen (SG, MED) for example describes male MGO students as follows: 'I would say they're not intellectual. They're more practical'. A lecturer interviewed from the MGO describes students at the faculty as the 'outdoor' type. In this sense, intra-gender distinctions can be observed between the two case study faculties with regard to generalised learner types. This is similar to Heathfield and Wakeford's (1993) observation of types of people at university. The authors distinguish between 'book-laden studious students' and 'idle students who drink'. These categorisations capture the identified difference between male students at EEC and MGO.

To conclude, social and non-social student characteristics have been identified as inclusive/exclusive aspects of institutional habitus which can affect an individual's sense of belonging. With regard to social characteristics, it is suggested that a 'classed' aspect of the student body can be objectively observed in terms of frequencies capturing parents' educational level and estimation of family income. However, it is also argued that in practice this 'classed' aspect is not as prominent when compared to the gender aspect of particular case study faculties which seems to be more 'visible'. Furthermore, both these social characteristics were not identified as the most salient aspects of the different institutional habituses as shaped by the

student body. Indeed, differences within particular gender groups suggest that different youth cultures as represented through dominant stereotypical representations can override social classifications. This argument becomes problematic if youth cultures are themselves socially structured; however, this was not a theme identified in the conducted student interviews.

The aim of this chapter has been to discuss socially inclusive and exclusive practices and characteristics shaping different institutional habituses. The underlying conclusion has been that the institutional habituses of the case study faculties cannot be designated as having either an 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' institutional habitus (e.g. Thomas 2002). Rather, the institutional habitus of each faculty is shaped by both inclusive and exclusive practices and characteristics. For example, FTB students generally reported negative experiences with their lecturers. However, with regard to assessment, none of the students reported teacher subjectivity. On the other hand, DES students tended to talk positively about their communication with academic staff; however, they were dissatisfied with the costs of study materials they had to meet. In other words, institutional habituses are complex and comprise both socially inclusive and exclusive practices shaping the educational choices and experiences of students occupying different social positions. This conforms to Crozier et al.'s (2008) research study findings on student experiences in HE; the authors concluded that 'an interrelated spectrum of differentiated experiences exists across and within the institutions rather than simply a stark polarisation' (p.167).

This chapter has identified the following inclusive aspects of institutional habitus: career advice, opportunity for direct contact with helpful and supportive academic staff (preferably face-to-face, but also via e-mail), monitoring of student progress, lecturer sensitivity to differences in prior knowledge, clarity in course transmission, encouragement with regard to course difficulty, objective assessment, good organisation and availability of resources, as well as a socially mixed student intake. Out of the six case study faculties, the EEC seems to have most of these characteristics. In this sense, it is symbolic that the Croatian acronym for the faculty, i.e. FER, stands for 'fair' in Croatian.

On the other hand, exclusive aspects of institutional habituses were identified as: admission procedures based on the grammar school programme, entrance exam including 'general culture' questions, academic staff offering private tutoring to applicants, unsupportive lecturers, assumptions of prior knowledge, unclear transmission of course content, subjective assessment, overcrowded timetable, lack of resources and a socially homogenous student intake. It is

suggested that such exclusive aspects of institutional habitus are particularly problematic for students who do not possess 'quantities of relevant capital bestowed on them in the process of habitus formation, which makes them better players than others in certain field games' (Grenfell and James 1998, p. 21).

## **PART 3**

### **GETTING IN, GETTING ON AND GETTING OUT**

## STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

*Case 1: Mili is a first generation, 19 year-old student at the Department of Mathematics. She grew up in a village in the north-western part of Croatia and completed a general secondary grammar school in a small town nearby before moving to Zagreb for study purposes. She now lives in student accommodation. Her parents have both completed a three-year vocational school and work full-time in the private sector as manual workers. She estimated her family's monthly income as 'average'. She enrolls into the second year successfully.*

*Case 2: Petar is a first generation, 19 year-old student at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing. He grew up in a village in eastern Croatia and completed vocational secondary schooling (specialising to be an electrician) in a town nearby before moving to Zagreb for study purposes. He lives in army base accommodation. His parents have both completed four-year vocational schooling and work full-time in the private sector as manual workers. He estimated his family's monthly income as 'average' (6 000 kuna – approx. £700). He does not enrol into the second year successfully.*

*Case 3: Danijela is a second generation, 19-year old student at the Faculty of Medicine. She grew up in Zagreb where she completed a maths secondary grammar school. She lives at home with her parents. Her father has a PhD and works as a lecturer in sociology and her mother has a university degree and works as a researcher; they both work in the state sector. She estimated her family's monthly income as 'above average' (around 17 000 kuna approx. £2000). She successfully enrolls into the second year of study.*

*Case 4: Andrej is a second generation, 19 year-old student at the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil. He grew up in western Croatia and completed a classical secondary grammar school before moving to Zagreb for study purposes. He lives in student accommodation. His parents have both completed higher education and he estimated his family's monthly income as 'above average' (around 12 000 kuna - approx. £1400). He does not enrol into the second year successfully.<sup>46</sup>*

---

<sup>46</sup> The selection of these four students was informed by their family's educational background, estimation of family income, gender and whether or not they had enrolled into the second year successfully. The resulting selection might suggest that there is a gender aspect to successful enrolment. However, out of the interviewed ten students who did not enrol into the second year successfully, five were men and five were women. An examination of questionnaire results reinforces this. Although expectation of successful enrolment into the second year of study results from the students' approximation, and as such may not accurately reflect their actual success, the Mann Whitney test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between female and male students ( $U = 44994.5$ ,  $z = -1.698$ ,  $p = .089$ ) with regard to expectation of successful enrolment.

This chapter draws empirically on these four students' interviews to examine their educational practices of HE continuation, choice of university and course, and educational experiences and progress. In doing so, the chapter re-emphasises certain themes identified in the previous chapters, such as the 'naturalness' of continuing to HE for second generation students and the importance of acquired capital for first generation students in their decision to continue to HE; the role of fields in reinforcing or developing such an educational disposition; the dominant position the University of Zagreb occupies in the Croatian HE field; financial constraints on course choice experienced by students with financial difficulties; the contribution secondary schooling makes to course progress; institutional characteristics which support or impinge progress (e.g. course organisation, assessment, teacher-student interaction); the effect changing private and public spaces have on student experiences, as well as how professional responsibilities can impinge on educational progress.

Theoretically, this chapter brings together the analytical tools used in the previous chapters: cultural capital, social capital, economic capital, field and institutional habitus. The educational repercussions captured by these concepts have so far largely been addressed in separate chapters so as to allow for a more detailed theoretical appreciation of their individual properties, as well as to illustrate more specifically their empirical relevance. However, as Bourdieu observed 'it would be a mistake to seek the explanatory principles of the responses in one factor or in a set of factors combined by addition' (1984, p.437). Therefore, in order to overcome such reduction or addition in accounting for the social aspects of students' educational pathways, the chapter draws more specifically on Bourdieu's theory of practice (e.g. 1977). In line with Grenfell and James (1998), it is argued that this theory offers relational insights and understandings not readily visible in other approaches. This relates particularly to its attempt to avoid the subjectivist-objectivist dichotomy by developing 'a science of dialectical relations between objective structures...and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them' (Bourdieu 1977, p.3).

In this theoretical sense, the following sections provide examples of the predictable workings of habitus reinforced by the fields it interacts with, as well as unpredictable workings of habitus transformed by fields acting as sources of capital. The former examples illustrate how Bourdieu's theory of practice accounts for social reproduction, whereas the latter examples illustrate how it can account for social change. However, the underlying tone is that fields tend to act as

constraining rather than liberating forces. In other words, social reproduction is a more frequently observed scenario than social change.

Furthermore, even though the chapter identifies examples of transformative educational practices, which might indicate individual agency or 'intersubjective struggle and change' (King 2000, p.425), it is argued that agency and structure are inseparably interrelated. In other words, any example of agency has a structured aspect to it, just as every structure has agential contributions to it. Such a stance risks criticism from rational choice theorists or relativist theoreticians on the grounds that it undermines agential reflexivity and its emancipatory potential. However, the aim here is not to question the possibility of reflection. Indeed, many of the interviewed students displayed practices and shared thoughts which seemed far from mechanistic human behaviour. Rather, the aim is to argue that reflexivity is responsive to its setting and that in this sense transformative practices are most likely to result from empowering settings which encourage reflection but also enable action. In this sense, Bourdieu's (1992) assertion that habitus can be transformed via 'socio-analysis' (Footnote 86) is insufficient since it does not take into consideration the circumstances required for the practical fulfilment of such transformation. However, Bourdieu (1977) does acknowledge this himself when he states that: 'it is not sufficient to become aware of class condition in order to be liberated from the lasting dispositions it produces' (p.215).

Finally, it is suggested that it might be more appropriate to refer to aspects of habitus as transformative rather than a transformed habitus as Bourdieu does in *Distinction* (1984)<sup>47</sup>. The latter has an essentialist tone which seems incompatible with Bourdieu's relational theoretical framework.

#### *Continuing to higher education – inertia and change*

According to Bourdieu (1984) 'to a given volume of inherited capital there corresponds a band of more or less equally probable trajectories leading to more or less equivalent positions (this is the *field of the possibles* objectively offered to a given agent)' (p.110). Placing this in an educational context, the HE continuation pathway can be, as Bourdieu (1979) noted, an 'impossible', 'possible' or 'natural' scenario, where the 'impossible' is most often associated with those poorest

---

<sup>47</sup> For example, changes to a habitus might be observed with regard to lifestyle changes, but not in relation to its affective dimension. That is, a person from a working class background may unexpectedly become rich (changed objective conditions of existence), start living in an expensive neighbourhood (changed lifestyle), yet continue to experience feelings of insecurity and non-entitlement 'characteristic' of people from a working class background.

and the 'natural' with those richest in overall volume of initial capital. Bourdieu explains such predictable associations as follows: 'cumulative exposure to certain social conditions instils in individuals an ensemble of durable and transposable dispositions – that internalize the necessities of the extant social environment – inscribing inside the organism the patterned inertia and constraints of external reality' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p.13). For Bourdieu, it is primarily these 'durable and transposable dispositions' or 'habitus' that 'generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions' (1984, p.170).

Since this study has only included first year undergraduate students, the consideration of educational pathways has been confined to those for whom HE was either 'natural' or 'possible'. To illustrate the former, Danijela indicated in her questionnaire that she found continuing to HE (taken here as an example of 'meaningful practice') 'natural', and when she was asked in the interview why she had continued to HE she began her answer by saying 'well, my parents studied at the Faculty of Philosophy'. Similarly, Andrej answers the same question as follows: 'my dad studied at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering'. In other words, these students' explanations start by an indication of their inherited cultural capital shaping their habitus: their parents have completed HE, and in this sense their continuation to HE is part of their family's educational history. Both these students exemplify Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) understanding of 'patterned inertia'. The two students also illustrate Farnell's (2000) interpretation of Bourdieu: 'Bourdieu tells us that the generative schemes and dispositions of the *habitus* are durable because they are learned during the early years of life. Inscribed in "bodily hexis", they are habitual and unreflexive' (p.402).

However, this 'naturalness' is not just shaped by the students' initial capital as inherited from their parents. Rather, their habitus is also further reinforced by the dynamics of the fields they engage with either explicitly or implicitly; these include the secondary education field and the labour market field. With regard to the former, both these students have completed secondary grammar schooling, which is the expected institutional route to HE. In this case, the familial primary shaping of habitus is further institutionally strengthened. Bourdieu (1977) calls this 'confirming the primary habitus' (p.44). On the other hand, in relation to the labour market field, both Danijela and Andrej indicated in their questionnaires that a HE degree would increase their employment opportunities. Importantly, the employment opportunities they are hoping for are not manual but rather professional occupations like their parents'. Here we see the habitus as not only shaped explicitly by the past and present fields of activity but also by the labour market field

of the future. This future dimension is a contribution to Reay's (2004, 1995) conceptualisation of habitus as a complex interplay between past and present. As she notes: 'although the habitus is a product of early childhood experience, and, in particular socialisation within the family, it is continually modified by individuals' encounters with the outside world' (1995, p.356). It is argued here that one such encounter with the outside world which modifies habitus is also an individual's projection of the future, although it is acknowledged that the past and the present are constitutive of this projection.

Mili and Petar have also continued to HE which would, according to Bourdieu (e.g. 1984), suggest that all these four students have a similar volume of capital. However, Mili and Petar have grown up in different 'conditions of existence' to Danijela and Andrej: their parents have not completed HE and they both estimate their family's income as 'average'. To borrow Bourdieu's (1977) term, their habitus experiences 'conversion'; although it might be more appropriate to claim that educational aspects of their habitus have experienced conversion. Bourdieu's theoretical framework allows for such a conversion, i.e. it recognizes that a fraction of a class deviates from the trajectory most common for the class as a whole. Bourdieu explains such unexpected 'shifts' as depending on 'collective events – wars, crises etc. – or individual events – encounters, affairs, benefactors etc. – which are usually described as (fortunate or unfortunate) accidents' (1984, p.110). In other words, a field effect is recognized as contributing to conversion.

Mili's case illustrates such a serendipitous approach to explaining 'unexpected shifts'. Her decision to continue to HE was not a 'natural' path shaped by family conditioning and institutionally reinforced. Rather, her decision was made in primary schooling when her mathematics teacher urged her to enrol into a grammar school and then to pursue her 'talent' for mathematics in HE. In this example, Mili's primary school mathematics teacher becomes the 'individual event' or the significant 'encounter' contributing to Mili's shift from continuing her parents' educational and possibly professional trajectory. In her case, the educational field acts as a source of social capital which shapes her educational disposition, rather than reinforcing the existing one. According to Reay (1995), Bourdieu's framework envisages this possibility since:

At one end habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end of the continuum habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations (p.357).

In Mili's case, the expectations are raised. However, Mili's parents also have a crucial role in this process since they emotionally support their daughter's recommended educational path; she says that her parents 'just want us to have a better life'. In other words, although her family's initial conditioning has not necessarily encouraged a 'naturalness' to continue to HE, it also does not discourage such a disposition when it is being affected by the educational field; the initial and acquired conditions of existence cooperate rather than deviate. In Mili's example, habitus leads to social change (she diverges from her parents' educational history) through its positive engagement with the primary education field as a source of capital.

In addition, apart from wanting to continue to HE, two fortunate institutional events contribute to Mili's HE path: she is successful in gaining a room in student accommodation and she is awarded a state scholarship. In her case, further institutional intervention into her family's 'conditions of existence' enables the practical exercise of an acquired disposition to continue to HE. That is, the post-primary fields Mili engages with further provide her with space (student room), as well as social (primary school teacher), cultural (expectation to continue to HE) and economic (scholarship) capitals which contribute to her ongoing shift from the probable trajectory that Bourdieu's theory of practice, in its social reproduction version, 'predicts' for her. Mili becomes a 'lucky survivor' (Bourdieu 1988). This 'unpredictable' trajectory is different from Danijela's and Andrej's 'predictable' educational path, undertaken by a habitus primarily shaped by their initial, rather than (as in Mili's case) newly acquired conditions of existence.

Unlike Mili, who indicated she had decided to continue to HE in primary school, Petar said that it was natural for him to continue to HE because he wanted a better job than what his parents had. In other words, Petar's educational dispositions are shaped in relation to his parents (like Danijela's and Andrej's), but in a negative rather than positive way. In Petar's case, a shift in expected trajectory is not a result of a 'collective event' or an 'externally' driven accidental individual event, as Bourdieu (1984) suggests, but rather an individual reaction to unsatisfactory conditions of existence. Continuing to HE is a 'way out' for Petar. This resonates with Leathwood and Read's (2009) observation that continuing to higher education is not just about getting a good salary or a good job; according to Leathwood and O'Connell (2003, p.611) it is 'rather (or also) a defence against getting nowhere and having nothing'. However, Petar's disposition to continue to HE is an insufficient prerequisite for this educational path. He seems to have overcome the past workings of initial capital in shaping his 'predictable' educational trajectory, but these workings are also part of the present and he faces new barriers to the HE

field. In this sense, similarly to Mili, field interventions into expected educational trajectories can be observed. That is, Petar's shift from his family's educational background is also made practically possible by the Interior Ministry's cadet programme, which provides him with food and lodgings (space, economic capital) for the duration of his course in return for a specific period of employment in the army; as Petar remarks: 'I applied because of the scholarship'. In other words, it is the workings of these institutional factors around the HE field that enable him to act out his transformative educational disposition in the present.

Mili's and Petar's shifting educational trajectories serve as good examples for a brief discussion of Bourdieu's theory of practice in terms of agency. Similarly to many of Bourdieu's critics, Farnell (2000) states that: 'Bourdieu's theory lacks an adequate conception of the nature and location of agency and an adequate conception of the nature of human powers and capacities' (p.403). Indeed, both of Bourdieu's 'transformative' moments mentioned earlier, i.e. collective event or accidental individual event, undermine agential contributions to transformative trajectories, since both include examples of external forces shaping such trajectories. Therefore, even though a shift in trajectory might suggest agency at face-value, Bourdieu's underlying causes of this shift seem to tip the balance in favour of habitus as 'passive agency' in determining practice.

Both Mili's and Petar's shifts from their expected social trajectory indicate agency; however, in both these cases it is an agency responsive to conditions of existence. Having said this, in Mili's case agential practice results from changing conditions of existence externally initiated (teacher); in Petar's case, on the other hand, it is an agential reaction to present conditions of existence (dissatisfaction with family conditions). Two points are important here. Firstly, a difference of 'agency' can be observed between the two students. That is, although the educational trajectories of both students are prompted by external factors, Petar's motivation to change his expected path, i.e. the motivation for action, comes from him rather than a teacher. Secondly, external forces shaping trajectories are not necessarily negative. For example, Mili's teacher provides her with guidance for HE continuation, i.e. a transformative educational trajectory is encouraged rather than hindered by an external factor. Finally, the changing aspects of these students' habituses occur in cooperation with the fields they engage with. According to Farnell (2000):

To avoid behaviourism and determinism, dispositions must be grounded in a natural kind of powerful particular, in which case the stimulus does not determine the response, but is the occasion for a powerful particular to *produce* the response (p.406).

In Mili's and Petar's cases the 'stimulus' is changing conditions of existence, but Mili and Petar are the 'particulars' who 'produce the response'. Thus an aspect of agency is exercised, since Mili and Petar could have also reproduced their parents' educational history. However, because conditions of existence and practice are interrelated through habitus, their creative moves are also not a result of 'the apparently purely subjective acts of an individual's decision-making behaviour' (Gebauer and William 2000, p. 71).

Continuing to HE is shaped by a complex web of identified interrelated factors shaping habitus which includes past and present conditions of existence (cultural, social and economic capital) as well as their interaction with other diverse fields (education, labour market). However, as already mentioned, within this complexity there is also an identifiable difference between students from different socio-economic backgrounds with regard to how this complex web is mobilised. For Danijela and Andrej, the two second generation students, continuation to HE is 'natural' and positive, i.e. they are taking their parents' educational paths and they have 'initial' familial capital at their disposal to support them on this journey. The educational fields they interact with on their way to HE merely reinforce a socially predictable trajectory. As Reay (1995) notes in a Bourdieuean vein, all the privileged 'need to do in order to attain the goals that best suit their interests is to follow their dispositions' (p.354). On the other hand, Mili is not taking the educational route of her parents, her continuation is significantly related to an adult outside her family and she has to draw on institutional support, or individually acquired capital, in her educational practice. In Mili's case, the educational field does not reinforce existing capital but is rather a source of new capital. Without this possibility of acquiring capital, she risks a socially predictable trajectory which in her case would involve lower socio-economic status. Similarly, Petar has to draw on institutional support in order to continue to HE and even though he describes his educational pathway as 'natural', this naturalness has a different tone to the one reported by Danijela and Andrej: it is a reaction against, rather than a natural continuation of his parents' lifestyle.

In order to reinforce the observed student differences, questionnaire results suggest that continuation to HE was a 'natural' process for the majority of students. Indeed, this was the response given by 71.3 per cent of respondents<sup>48</sup>. Frequency counts also showed that for 18.2 per

---

<sup>48</sup> In the administered questionnaire, students were asked when they had decided to continue to higher education. The options given were: it was natural, primary schooling, first two years of secondary schooling, last two years of secondary schooling, last minute decision.

cent of students this decision was made in primary schooling<sup>49</sup>. These results suggest that by the age of fourteen a significant majority of students (89.5%) had already expected to continue to HE; this was also the case with Danijela, Andrej, Petar and Mili. However, the output of the Mann Whitney test indicates a statistically significant difference ( $U = 42079.0$ ,  $z = -2.206$ ,  $p = .027$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to how early the students expected to continue to HE. Frequency counts show that 'natural' continuation to HE was reported by a higher percentage of second generation students (73.4%) than their first generation counterparts (67.4%). Similarly, a higher percentage of second generation students (19.7%) associated their HE expectations with primary schooling (15.4% of first generation students indicated the same). On the other hand, a higher percentage of first generation students indicated their expectations to continue to HE were shaped in the last two years of secondary schooling (7.2% in comparison to 3.4% of second generation students), in the first two years of secondary schooling (6.3% in comparison to 2.4% of second generation students) or that it was a last moment decision (3.6% in comparison to 1.2% of second generation students).

Mili's and Petar's continuation to HE illustrates social change resulting from re-shaped aspects of habitus through new conditions of existence. However, these re-shaping institutional interventions which make this educational trajectory possible are not available to all those who might benefit from them. For example, in Mili's case, a primary school teacher contributes to her educational path; however, with regard to course choice, as was mentioned in the chapter on social capital, only 17.6 per cent of students noted that a secondary school teacher or teachers 'mostly' or 'fully' influenced their choice of course and 5.6 per cent indicated a professional advisor. In addition, results showed that lower educational levels of parents were associated with higher estimations of teacher influences, suggesting the importance teachers can have for first generation students. Furthermore, Mili receives student accommodation which is only available to 8 per cent of the total student population (MSES 2009), and Petar's cadet programme is highly selective: 'There is a long selection process, over six months...1200 of us applied and only 25 were accepted'. It is therefore not surprising that educational pathways indicating social change are the exception rather than the norm, since fields do not tend to act as capital transformative fields but rather as capital reinforcing fields.

---

<sup>49</sup> 4.7 per cent indicated 'last two years of secondary schooling', 3.8 per cent 'first two years of secondary schooling' and for 2 per cent it was a last moment decision.

### *Choosing a university and course – (un)restrained?*

Inherited or acquired capitals (cultural, social, economic) and fields of the past (secondary education field), present (HE field) and future (labour market) have been identified in this study as shaping university and course choices. In addition, as was argued in previous chapters, a gendered aspect of course choice was also identified.

In relation to continuing to Zagreb University, this seems to be a natural and possible HE route for Danijela, Andrej, Mili and Petar. All four students, irrespective of their social background, displayed awareness of the HE field as hierarchical and recognised the University of Zagreb as occupying a dominant position in this hierarchy. The symbolic capital they attribute to the university, which positions it as dominant, relates to the university's tradition and increased job opportunities, as was discussed in the chapter on playing fields. Such an association between tradition and status was also identified in Reay et al.'s (2005) research; however, unlike this research, yet similarly to Brooks' (2003) research findings, none of the interviewed students reported any social discomfort as informing university choice. This can be related to the fact that the students did not associate a dominant social group with any of the Croatian universities. Finally, like with the disposition to continue to HE, the 'naturalness' to study at Zagreb university was also made possible either by initial familial capital (Danijela and Andrej) or acquired capital (Mili and Petar).

To pursue this last point further, Ball and Vincent (1998) make a distinction between 'cold' and 'hot' knowledge in relation to secondary school choice, where the former is characterised as official, formal, public and abstract, and the latter as personal, social, anecdotal and experiential. Judging by Danijela's, Andrej's, Mili's and Petar's interviews, all four of these students drew on 'hot' knowledge in their HE decision-making process, which is not surprising since 'cold' knowledge in the form of examination results, research findings or league tables is not available in the Croatian context. As Polšek (2004) notes: 'Although there are university days when the activities of the HE institutions are highlighted, no systematic marketing of Croatian education exists' (p.290). This makes 'hot' knowledge particularly relevant. However, whereas the two second generation students receive direct advice from their parents (both their parents have degrees from the University of Zagreb), the two first generation students rely on their personal extra-familial contacts. In terms of university information and parental support, Mili and Petar can be classified as Reay et al.'s (2005) 'contingent' choosers (limited information, little parental

involvement), whereas Danijela and Andrej as 'embedded' choosers (extensive information, parents actively involved) (p.112). For example, according to Mili, 'Where I come from everyone thinks it should be Zagreb, only Zagreb, so if you enrol into a course in x it's not the same'. Mili's use of 'everyone' here is indicative of the potentially unreliable word-of-mouth nature she draws on to attribute high status to Zagreb University. Similarly, according to Petar:

Our teacher told us that x and Zagreb are not too different, but I heard from people who study here that there is a big difference. He said that there was no difference between x and Zagreb...that the differences would be smaller with the Bologna process, but I don't think it's like that yet.

In Petar's case, there is conflicting advice from his social contacts about where to study, and he makes his final decision based on the general sense Mili also mentioned in her interview. On the other hand, Danijela's educational deliberation is far from serendipitous and involves considering undergraduate courses at American universities. This international perspective in Danijela's educational deliberation suggests a disposition shaped in high socio-economic conditions and indeed, out of the four students, Danijela has the highest levels of economic and cultural capital. In other words, her initial capital shapes a disposition towards considering HE options abroad as a possibility, whereas such deliberation is 'impossible' for the other students; this includes Andrej, which suggests intra-group variation with regard to levels of capital and their effects.

Moving on to choice of course, the questionnaire results suggested that by the age of 14 the majority of students had decided to continue to HE, while the questionnaire findings were more dispersed when it came to students' timing of final course choice: 31.4 per cent of students indicated they decided on which course to apply to in the last two years of secondary schooling, the enrolled course was 'natural' progress for 27.1 per cent of students, whereas it was a last minute decision for 20.2 per cent of students. 12.8 per cent indicated they made their choice in primary school, whereas 8.5 per cent indicated the 'first two years of secondary schooling' option. According to the Mann Whitney test there is no statistically significant difference ( $U=44868.5$ ,  $z=-.127$ ,  $p=.899$ ) between first and second generation students with regard to when they decided to enrol into the particular course. In other words, whereas the majority of students already knew by the age of fourteen whether they wanted to continue to HE, at the same age the majority (irrespective of their family's educational background) were not yet sure what they would study. This indicates that it might be more difficult to observe patterned social workings of habitus with regard to course choice.

Mili, a student at MAT, developed an interest in mathematics in primary schooling through encouragement by a teacher. Then, in secondary school, she successfully competed in state mathematics competitions and her achievements enabled her to have direct enrolment into the mathematics course. In other words, Mili's educational disposition to study mathematics was primarily shaped by the education fields she engages with which recognize, reward and encourage her talent and contribute to transforming aspects of habitus. This recognition of talent fits in well with Bourdieu's (1979) contention that exceptional abilities help students from less privileged backgrounds to overcome their familial disadvantage (p.83). Interestingly, in Mili's case, field conditioning is so powerful it overrides the gendered aspect of habitus which can influence educational choices as discussed in the chapter on fields. She indicates in her questionnaire that she thinks mathematics is more appropriate for men and in the interview explains this as the stereotypical assumption people have about the mathematics department. However, her shaped academic disposition sidesteps this gendered aspect. Mathematics as an area dominated by men seems to run across cultural contexts (e.g. Arnot et al. (1999).

If one was to explain Mili's educational trajectory solely based on the previous paragraph, the suggestion would be that a series of transformative field moments in recognition of her talent contributed to a transformative educational biography. However, although Mili's educational path is transformative in relation to her family background, it is important to note that she did not enrol into the course she said she was really interested in studying:

I was really interested in design, but I didn't have...I didn't know how to draw and I have never really had drawing and since my parents couldn't afford to pay private tuition so that I could learn, I decided to study maths, I didn't know anything else.

Thus Mili's continuation to the mathematics course results from socially constrained, rather than transformative aspects of habitus; she does not have the opportunity either through private tuition (four out of the five interviewed design students paid for private tuition) or her secondary schooling to develop the skills required for her to study a course she was 'really interested in'. To illustrate her interest further, she describes the Design faculty as follows: 'the best faculty in Croatia, I think the most interesting people are there, they do the most interesting things...I don't know, it's the best faculty'. Mili remarks that: 'I was never 100 per cent sure [about mathematics], but it seems to be my destiny'. This use of 'destiny' resonates strongly with Bourdieu's (1979) observation that: 'subjects from the most disadvantaged classes are those most

likely to be crushed by the weight of their social destiny' (p.25). Indeed, although Mili manages to overcome 'the weight' of her social destiny with regard to educational progress in general, her case illustrates how lack of economic capital and characteristics of the secondary educational field can make certain course choices impossible for some students. In her example, interest is insufficient under constraining conditions of existence which resign students from underprivileged backgrounds to 'impossible ambitions' (Bourdieu 1979, p.26).

In Petar's case, the electrical engineering course is a 'natural' choice since he also completed secondary schooling in this study area (vocational school for electrical engineering). He explains that: 'I have been in electrical engineering since primary schooling, I chose a vocational school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade [final year of primary schooling] and this was my first choice course too'. Just as with Mili, one can observe 'the habitus inculcated by all previous forms of pedagogic action' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.72), i.e. the educational field rather than family-related capitals shapes the educational trajectory. This again illustrates the potential of fields to affect aspect of habitus shaping educational practices. Indeed, this field impact is particularly relevant in cases where inertia of the habitus leads people to maintain their family's less privileged social positions. However, Petar was also at risk of experiencing constraints on his educational choices. As a cadet of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, Petar is expected to study on one of the Ministry's priority courses. Luckily for him, the electrical engineering course is one such priority, but had he wanted to study design the Interior Ministry would not have financed his studies. Petar's example confirms the contention made by authors such as Bourdieu (1979) or Ball and Vincent (1998) that choice is socially embedded, rather than a result of rational calculus.

So far, it has been suggested that Mili's and Petar's educational choices have been primarily shaped by the educational fields they engage with, but that they are also constrained due to their family's financial circumstances. On the other hand, in Danijela's and Andrej's cases, a familial contribution can be identified with regard to course choice and these students do not experience any economic barriers to their choices. For example, whereas Mili's and Petar's course interest developed through their schooling, Danijela's interest was prompted by the book 'The Selfish Gene' which her dad had bought. She said that she read the book and decided she wanted to study molecular biology, but then she talked to two of her parents' friends who advised her to study medicine if she wanted to do cancer or HIV research which is what particularly interests her. Danijela's case illustrates how inherited capitals (objectified cultural capital, familial social capital) can shape course choice, which is not the case in Mili's and Petar's examples where

acquired capitals have a determining influence. In addition, the role of inherited economic capital can also be illustrated by Danijela's financial ease when opting for a six year course. She confirms Bourdieu's (1979) assertion that some occupations can only be undertaken by those with wealthy parents. Finally, Danijela refers to traditionally male and female specializations in medicine, which suggests gendered disciplinary orientations within the faculty.

Similar financial ease to Danijela's can also be observed in Andrej's example. He initially applies to the EEC and says: 'I went to the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, wrote the entrance exam, did pretty well, got in, fee-paying, non-fee paying, it wouldn't matter'. In other words, financial concerns are not an issue for Andrej as they are for Petar for example. Moreover, apart from familial economic capital exerting an influence on ease of choice, the workings of familial cultural capital can also be observed in Andrej's initial choice since the EEC is where his father graduated from. Talking about his HE plans at lower levels of education, Andrej says: 'I would immediately tell people I would go to FER [EEC], because my dad graduated from there'. Andrej's case illustrates a disposition shaped by initial familial capital which goes beyond HE continuation to include choice of course. Indeed, had Andrej enrolled into the EEC, his educational trajectory would have been exemplary of Bourdieu's 'inheritor' (1979); not only would he have continued to HE in his parents' footsteps, but he would have also enrolled into the same course as his father. Such an extreme version of inherited disposition is also brought up in Danijela's interview when she mentions how 'there are people who go to medical school because their parents are doctors themselves'. When Andrej was asked to explain why he thought some people reproduced their parents' trajectories he said:

I think *it just makes sense*. If parents have some sort of business and the children get into that business, why not? I think that if my dad was a plumber I would also be a plumber. Not because he would make me do that or some other fixation but because we are a reflection of our parents from when we are kids...I'd probably go with him to work, he'd teach me...it would probably be like that.

In other words, for Andrej social reproduction seems to be a natural and acceptable process. It does not necessarily result from any familial pressure, but rather spontaneous imitation. In this family-related, 'unknowing' sense, Andrej's explanation fits in well with Bourdieu's concretization of habitus as primarily acquired in the family on implicit grounds (e.g. 1977). However, Andrej does not end up 'imitating' his father and he enrolls into MGO as a last minute decision. He explains this by saying that although he successfully passed the entrance exam at EEC, when he

was expected to enrol he was given the number 980 on the waiting list and enrolments were only on number 200 (he compares this to having to stand in line at a bank with a number), so he decided he 'could not be bothered to wait' and went to MGO instead. Andrej said:

I have a friend here at the faculty and I asked her what it was like and she told me 'you do geology'...I asked her whether there was any maths and physics and she told me that there was, so I came here and enrolled...then I phoned my folks to tell them and they didn't believe me.

K: What did they say?

Andrej: Your life (laughs)...my family is ok...even above average ok...what's important for them is that I'm happy...I think I made a good choice...Ms X in the student office [at MGO] was great, I was really happy. At FER [EEC] they didn't care a damn about you.

In Andrej's case, divergence from his father's educational trajectory seems to be institutionally directed, i.e. there is a field intervention both at EEC, where administration is slow, and MGO, where administration is encouraging. However, his familial capitals (emotional and economic) continue to exert their influence through the ease with which Andrej can afford to 'try out' courses. There do not appear to be any social restrictions to Andrej's course choice, i.e. he does not have any financial worries and his parents appear to support his decisions. In addition, his educational choices include two faculties where the majority of students are men, suggesting what Adkins (2004b) phrases as 'synchronicity between subjective and objective structures' (p.190). Andrej's fairly relaxed approach to choosing a course is a privilege neither Mili nor Petar could afford.

### *Expectations and secondary schooling*

The following sections explore students' enrolment into the second year of study. This transition seems to be shaped by an interacting plethora of both institutional (secondary education field, HE field) and non-institutional (initial and present capital, labour market) factors. The present section focuses on the interrelationship between the secondary and HE fields with respect to HE expectations and academic preparedness.

Beekhoven et al.'s (2004) research found that student expectations were an important factor shaping course progress. Similarly, according to Quinn et al. (2005), progress difficulties arise when the reality of the course proves to be different to expectations. In Mili's and Petar's cases, despite the mismatch between how they constructed HE before they enrolled and their course

experience, both students seemed committed to completing their enrolled course. However, the distinction between embedded and contingent choosers made in the section on course choice can also be applied to these students' conceptions of student life: whereas Mili and Petar are poorly informed about what to expect as students, Andrej and Danijela are not. To illustrate this, Mili says:

Now that I am a student I would describe student life differently to *what I see on films* and how I used to imagine it.

K: How did you imagine it?

Mili: I used to think that you come to the faculty here and there for lectures and then you go out to parties or something like that. *That's how American films show it*, as if it's nothing scary, but now I see it's not about partying.

Mili's expected HE experience is based on a fictional source, and she finds that student life is not what she imagined it to be. As a first generation student, she does not seem to have direct HE experiences to draw upon. Similarly, Petar says: 'before I started studying I thought students had a lot of fun and then when there is an exam they start studying a week before...now I see that some students are like that, but not at my faculty'. Mili's and Petar's interviews suggest that they did not receive any guidance in their secondary schools about what to expect at HE level. Because of this institutional lack, the two students shape their expectations on the basis of television series and general impressions, with the result that they experience an academic culture shock. This places them in a less privileged position to those who 'have a sense of the game' inherited from their family and who are therefore in a better position to play it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

In comparison to Mili and Petar, Danijela and Andrej are better informed about their studies: Danijela expects her course to be difficult and Andrej recognizes that 'I think this faculty [MGO] is too easy in comparison to other faculties. Not that I have passed the term or anything, but objectively speaking I think there are far more difficult faculties'. In other words, unlike Mili and Petar who expect a more laid back student experience, Danijela and Andrej expect it to be difficult. In relation to this, an institutional effect can also be observed. That is, even though Danijela is prepared for a challenging study experience, she says: 'I didn't imagine that I would have to work non-stop'. On the other hand, Andrej's interview extract suggests that his course is easier than what he expected it to be.

What these student interviews suggest is that there is a gap between first and second generation students with regard to student expectations. As Bourdieu (1979) noted, the son of a senior executive encounters HE all around him, whereas the son of an industrial worker forms his image of students and university education on the basis of impressions filtered through intermediate persons or situations (p.5). This is an example of how a 'neutral' secondary education field, in which the system treats individuals as if they were a socially homogenous group, can contribute to perpetuating social inequalities: in its neutrality, the field reinforces initial capitals shaping habitus, which tends to result in social reproduction rather than social change.

A further way in which secondary schooling contributes to reproductive aspects of habitus is through the HE field's recognition of its properties. Whereas Mili and Danijela indicated in their questionnaires that they 'mostly agreed' with the statement that their secondary schooling prepared them well for the enrolled course, Andrej answered that he fully agreed with this statement and Petar that he did not agree with the statement at all. The students who felt prepared by their secondary school were Mili, Danijela and Andrej, who completed a secondary grammar school, whereas Petar completed a vocational school.

In Mili's and Danijela's examples, secondary schooling has a positive impact in relation to content and working habits:

(1) I mean as far as mathematics, I only had three lessons per week, whereas people in maths grammar schools had more...but I went to state competitions...so it's not a problem for me...but maybe if I had gone to the fifth grammar school...I can see that these people know more than we do. But my friend told me that you don't notice the differences after the first year.  
(Mili)

(2) I managed to balance it all because it transferred itself...I learned a lot already in grammar school. (Danijela)

These quotes illustrate how a good foundation from secondary schooling can help with acquiring new HE content. In Mili's case, such 'acquisition of cultural capital through education enables the student to develop new facets of self, a new habitus' (Desmarchelier 1999, p.282). This also illustrates Bourdieu's (1972) assertion that: 'the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences...and the habitus transformed by schooling itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all other experiences' (p.87).

However, a poor foundation from secondary schooling can make first year progress difficult. This is the case with Petar, whose poor foundation in mathematics contributes to him not enrolling into the second year successfully:

It is a big difference [from secondary school] as far as learning...people from other schools, for example grammar schools are better off than me in mathematics. I have vocational training, but that's just one subject.

In terms of progress, whereas Mili, who is also a first generation student, manages to cope with the course requirements aided by her grammar school background, Petar's vocational schooling interferes with course progress. In Mili's case, the transformative aspects of habitus which directed her to HE continue to be reinforced by the educational fields it encounters and offer the possibility of social change. In Petar's case, the transformative aspects of habitus which have lead him to HE are at risk of being constrained, moving Petar's practice into a direction which would signal social reproduction. In other words, an educationally transformative biography requires continuous attention and institutional support. It is not just sufficient for a student to enrol into a HE institution, s/he also has to successfully progress through it.

Mili's and Petar's examples illustrate how previous educational fields can contribute to differences in educational practices. For Mili, grammar schooling is a source of capital which helps her continue her transformative educational trajectory, whereas for Petar, his vocational schooling hinders progress. Importantly, as the chapter on cultural capital indicated, there is a tendency for students who have completed vocational schooling, like Petar, to come from families with no prior HE experience. This suggests a scenario similar to the one reported from the Netherlands where the major educational impact of family background has been identified as in the transition from primary to secondary schooling. As De Graaf et al. (2000) point out: 'Since children are relatively young at this crucial time, it is likely that their decisions are strongly influenced by their parents' (p.94). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) also recognize this in their assertion that initial streaming, such as secondary school choice, is the point where social origin predetermines educational destiny.

However, Petar manages to overcome this lack of initial familial capital and enrolls into HE. What he is failed by is the lack of institutional support he receives once in HE. New barriers arise that need addressing. These relate to his mathematics teacher, who teaches for the grammar school majority and is not sensitive to differences related to previous schooling, and to the rigid exam

re-take system. With regard to the latter, Petar fails his mathematics exam in February 2007 and cannot re-take it until February 2008 after he has attended the mathematics lectures again. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977): 'All pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power' (p.5), where 'cultural arbitrary' expresses the interests of the dominant groups or classes (p.5). Lack of institutional awareness with regard to previous educational experiences, as well as inflexible assessment practices, are examples of how aspects of institutional habitus express the interests of the dominant group who have completed grammar schooling.

#### *Further aspects of institutional habitus*

As Bourdieu (1979) noted, HE institutions impose common practices and then expect a diverse body of students to comply with them. This section explores socially (in)sensitive aspects of institutional habitus including course organisation, assessment, teacher-student relationship and course difficulty. The argument furthered in the section is that socially insensitive institutional characteristics tend to reinforce the workings of individual and group habitus which establishes the higher education 'game' to the advantage of socially privileged students. Although the section's tone is negative in this sense, the underlying message is that it is precisely in these field characteristics that social change can be affected.

An institutional factor which shapes student experiences and progress is course organisation, mentioned in a positive sense by Mili, Danijela and Petar: 'The faculty is really well organised, we always have lectures in the morning' (Mili, MAT), 'I'm clear about what's expected of me, I think the literature is well defined, there's a good timetable, medicine is great in that sense...you know the schedule' (Danijela, MED); 'the lectures are organised better than at the other faculties because we have four hours per day' (Petar, EEC). In addition, these three students mentioned they felt well informed about their course. On the other hand, Andrej's (MGO) impression is that students on his course are not well informed: 'I think a lot of people don't know what's on when, what's what', which illustrates a negative organisational aspect.

A second factor identified in the interviews as shaping student experiences relates to the type of exams students take; according to Challis (2005), assessment is at the heart of the undergraduate experience. Petar and Andrej at their faculties (EEC and MGO) only have written exams in their first year and neither of them mentioned teacher subjectivity in marking, whereas Mili and

Danijela talked about teacher bias at oral exams. According to Mili, there is a teacher who gives better grades to students who have completed one of the more 'famous' grammar schools and who penalizes vocational school pupils in his marking. In the context of teacher bias as related to completed secondary schooling, it is argued that since vocational school pupils tend to be first generation students, such institutional practices reinforce social disparities in education. Mili also recognizes that visual appearance can matter at oral exams and she mentioned how she pays attention to what she wears for an oral exam. Indeed, several female students raised the issue of gender bias in marking. For example, Danijela at MED says:

I got a 5 in that exam<sup>50</sup>, but only because I got this one professor... *I could have also got a 2 if I had got a different professor...* I know people who got a high grade for little knowledge and those who got a 2 for a lot of knowledge...some professors work here as professors, others are doctors, some are older, some are younger, some of them like women, some like men, some professors don't like your face when they see you. *I thought that you get grades on the basis of knowledge....professors don't have the same criteria at oral exams.* It's the same for the written exams, but not oral.

In the selected examples, both Mili and Danijela identify a socially non-inclusive institutional practice. Bourdieu (1977) also addressed this issue and suggested that professorial judgement was unconsciously guided by social signs, such as bearing, dress, make-up, grammar, accent, tone and delivery. De Graaf et al. (2000) make a similar statement:

Schools are fashioned to guarantee the success of students from these privileged groups...Students who hold the dominant linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, and styles of interaction (habitus) are positively sanctioned by the teachers (p.93).

A further institutional factor shaping student experiences is the teacher-student relationship. Students gave both positive and negative examples of student-teacher interaction, as illustrated by the following extracts:

- (1) Professor X is great, he's the best and the others are so-so...not my style. As far as having access to them they have their tutorial times and we can go and see them and they always say that we should come if we don't understand something, but I don't think people go...it's embarrassing going to consultations. I am really embarrassed. (Mili)

---

<sup>50</sup> Grades are allocated on a scale from 1-5, 1 being unsatisfactory and 5 excellent.

- (2) Well, I can't generalize, but all the professors are really competent and the ones at histology are even nice...they encourage questions and discussions, whereas at anatomy they weren't really up for discussing...there was a closer relationship with teachers at my grammar school...maybe for people who didn't have such a close relationship this isn't such a big change. (Danijela)
- (3) Our teachers can't really notice us because there are a lot of us in groups, 80, 90 and we don't have oral exams. (Petar)
- (4) It's a fair relationship...quite professional, they don't insist on any stupidities. (Andrej)

Student-teacher contact was largely presented as impersonal by the four students, which is not surprising since none of the case study faculties have a supervision system which would enable more direct contact. A more personal teacher-student relationship was only mentioned by students at DES where student numbers enable such an interaction. However, student interviews at the other faculties in general resonated with Bourdieu's (1979) description of students in 60's France:

Condemned always to be the passive term in the pedagogic relationship...the acted upon subject devoid of initiative...he accumulates knowledge, materially and mentally, is dispensed from creating, especially from practicing creation, and is purely the receptacle of professorial knowledge (p.56).

This impersonality is particularly prominent at EEC, where Petar studies and where the student groups are large. It is important to note that, according to an OECD (2006) report, the observed increase in the number of students in Croatian HE has not been paralleled by an increase in educational staff. The report states that the number of teaching staff had increased from 6,748 to 7,917 (17%) between 1998 and 2003 (OECD 2006, p. 28).

Judging by the student interviews, the institutional habitus of the case study faculties is shaped by both inclusive and exclusive teacher practices. Teachers described as 'great', 'competent', those who 'encourage questions and discussions' and are 'professional' contribute to positive student experiences, whereas those described as 'weren't really up for discussing' to negative. In Quinn et al.'s (2005) findings, a negative view of academic staff as 'unapproachable' was identified as a factor contributing to students leaving their courses.

Finally, Beekhoven et al. (2004) identified hours spent on studying as a predictor of student progress. This also came up in the interviews with Mili, Danijela, Petar and Andrej. Mili and Danijela are two academically focused students, Petar is a student whose external responsibilities impinge on his opportunity to focus on his academic studies and Andrej is a socially focused student. For example, when Mili was asked at the beginning of her second year how much of her overall time went on studying in the first year she said: 'More than it should have. I think I focused too much on the faculty last year and I was burdened by it and this reflected on my health too...too much.' This academic focus can also be illustrated visually with two of the three photographs Mili took as representative of her student experience (see Figures 11.1 and 11.2 below). The texts to the right of the photographs are quotes taken from Mili's interview when she was describing why she took the photograph.



'I became addicted to caffeine here at the faculty...I drank a lot of cappuccinos or coffees, teas and stuff like that during exams'. Mili



'I used the laptop all the time...' Mili

Figure 11.2 Laptop.

Although Mili successfully enrolled into the second year of study, she describes her first year educational experience largely in negative terms. This experience began in her first week at university:

*The first week was a catastrophe because teachers scared us...this is a serious faculty, it's difficult, you need to study all the time, then they were explaining the points we need to get, you need this percentage for this and this percentage for that. And then exams, homework...and then for one subject we had blitz exams, these unannounced blitzes, and I thought how am I going to do this...then minus points. And I thought there was no way that I would pass the first term, we had this introduction to computing, which is programming...and I couldn't understand what they were saying.*

In this extract, Mili portrays an intense first week which included a lot of new information and discouraging teachers, as well as her first term experience of unannounced exams, minus points and worrying about how she was 'going to do this'. The negative tone Mili gives to the first week and first term of her educational experience pervades the entire year of study and she says how at one point she thought she would leave the course: 'Last year, in March or April, I felt awful at the faculty...but I thought that if I give up I would show other people I couldn't do it and then I thought it would be better to finish it'. Although Mili suggests that it was other people's expectations of her that made her stay on the course, she was also encouraged by the good marks she got after the crisis period. In her interview at the beginning of the second study year, Mili says:

*I'm not as scared now, I see that things ended well...we still have blitz exams like we had last year, but now I feel that if I study I'll manage somehow. I don't tremble any more whether I am going to make it...I remember the fear I felt when going to the faculty and I hated how some teachers treated us, like they thought we weren't for mathematics...now that's gone. I guess if we finished the first year they think it's ok.*

Mili's interview extracts illustrate an emotionally charged and stressful first year student experience and shows the contribution staff can have to such a negative experience. Furthermore, the extracts portray a strong academic aspect to her experience which also came across in how she described herself in relation to her construction of a successful student:

K: How would you describe a successful student?

Mili: Someone who manages to organize everything and balances hobbies with responsibilities.

K: Do you consider yourself to be a successful student in this respect?

Mili: I'll try to be this year, but I wasn't last year, I didn't have much of a social life.

In other words, although Mili successfully enrolled into the second year of study, she does not consider herself a successful student in terms of a more rounded student experience. This suggests that the educational field does not seem to encourage a healthy educational disposition but rather an unhealthy one. However, Mili also seems to be feeling better about her second year of study. This resonates with Galland and Oberti's (2000) assertion that:

In pedagogical terms, the break with the lycee is experienced as sharpest and most painful in the first year of undergraduate studies. The problems of adjusting to university study are most intense then. Once higher education students have got past the major obstacle of the first year, the difficulties they encounter seem less intense (p.111).

Danijela's first year experience is similar to Mili's with regard to its academic focus. She describes her course as: 'you have to study a lot...when I had histology or anatomy I would be at the faculty all morning and then...I think I would study from eight in the morning to six in the evening...around 70 per cent of my awake time was focused on the faculty'. In relation to this, one of the photographs Danijela took was of her bedroom and she explains her choice of motif in the following way:

I took photographs of things that surround me on a daily basis...this is the view from my balcony [points to the photograph] and I see this view every day from my bedroom too...this is my desk and I spend most of the day looking at this view because I study a lot, then I look through the window how the day changes and that view is really important to me, I would miss it if I moved somewhere else (see Figure 11.3).



Figure 11.3 Danijela's room.

Danijela uses the phrase 'elimination year' to describe how she sees the first year at many faculties as a testing year to see how interested someone really is. In other words, she suggests that the system's assumption is not positive, i.e. that everyone who has enrolled should complete the course, but rather negative: there is a need to identify who should not complete the course. This 'elimination' tone resonates with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) mention of individuals who come from under-represented groups in HE as those who 'survived elimination' at lower levels of education. Judging by Danijela's interview, it seems that successful entry into HE does not remove this threat of elimination.

Furthermore, like Mili, Danijela describes a successful student as 'someone who can combine his private life and his student life...there are a lot of people here [MED] who literally study from morning till night and I don't think they are particularly successful students'. Danijela describes herself as someone who manages to balance her academic and social life, although she does recognise that her social outings have decreased during the year. She describes herself as follows:

I think I work really hard in comparison to other students...that *I am focused, I don't waste time*, I don't spend time in front of the television...which has its good and bad sides too of course...*my social life has gone down...but I am satisfied with myself*...I think medicine is different from the other faculties and I often have crises when I wish I studied something else at the Faculty of Philosophy or design because there you go to lectures, but being a student there is also about going to student places, eating in student halls...going to plays, concerts. At the Faculty of Medicine being a student is studying all day long.

Danijela's interview extract suggests that different courses shape student experiences differently. She mentions medicine as a course which demands a predominantly academic focus and sees courses at the Faculty of Philosophy as enabling a balance between the academic and social aspects of student life. Interestingly, when talking about the crisis she went through on her course, Mili also mentioned she thought about going to the Philosophy Faculty and enrolling into the history of art course. Both students seem to see this faculty as a more 'humane' environment. A further important point in Danijela's interviews, which also comes out in this extract, is the relative ease with which she copes with her HE experience ('I am satisfied with myself'): Danijela displays a 'self-certainty' of middle class habitus (Bourdieu 1984, p.66) which contrasts sharply with Mili's uncertainties.

Whereas Mili and Danijela enrol into the second year academically successfully, Andrej and Petar do not. Andrej describes his student experience very differently to Mili and Danijela. Whereas they talked about attending lectures and studying a lot, Andrej admits to not attending lectures:

I don't go [to the faculty] every day...usually I don't go to lectures at all, but I go to the practical things...and when my friends go I go.

Andrej takes responsibility for not enrolling into the second year. He says: 'I think I didn't organize my time well, I should have started studying earlier, at least a month earlier'. He explains this poor academic time management as related to going out a lot, i.e. Andrej recognizes that his social life has interfered with his academic life. This issue of social ties as having a negative contribution has been addressed in the chapter on social capital in relation to Meir's (1999) observation that relationships with friends can have both a positive and negative effect on young people's educational attainment. Indeed, whereas Mili and Danijela described their colleagues as hard-working (e.g. Mili says: 'I have a feeling that a lot of people here are really into maths, they go on about equations for days, solve equations on the forum'), Andrej says that the first thing his course friends do is go to the faculty canteen to see whether anyone is there and have a drink. In Mili's case, the educational field is a source of social capital which contributes to her educational progress, whereas in Andrej's case such beneficial social capital seems less available.

Similarly to Mili and Danijela, Andrej describes a successful student as follows:

*Meets faculty requirements but doesn't neglect his social and night life. So, someone who manages to perfectly coordinate going out at weekends, taking an hour or two a day for coffees, sport, running around Jarun [lake in Zagreb], anything with friends and at the same time to pass exams...a well organised and well adapted student.*

However, unlike Mili and Danijela who, to a greater or lesser extent, find that their social life has suffered because of their academic concerns, Andrej's academic life suffers because of his social life. Whereas Mili's and Danijela's photographs of lap-tops and desks indicate their study focus, Andrej mentions in the interview that the best photographs to represent his study experiences would be black rubbish bags left over from parties. None of these students managed to strike an academically and socially productive balance during their first year. In other words, they do not manage to achieve Bourdieu's (1979) understanding of student life as: 'the fusion of leisure and work' (p.81). However, although Andrej did focus on his social life in the interviews, a

contributing factor to his social divergence is also the disorganisation and lack of information dissemination at his faculty, which is not the case at Mili's and Danijela's institutions.

Finally, unlike Mili, Danijela and Andrej who are struggling with striking a balance between the academic and social aspects of student life, Petar is struggling with balancing his academic life with cadet responsibilities. Although both Mili and Petar come from poorer backgrounds in comparison to Danijela and Andrej, Mili is more privileged than Petar in the sense that she is able to focus on her studies, whereas Petar's responsibilities can be equated with having a job. He describes his days as follows:

It is normal for me to have to wake up every morning at six, then have breakfast at half past six, then salute the flag...I have to attend this if I don't have to be at the faculty at eight in the morning. If it's at nine, then I have to attend, so I change my uniform and go to the faculty. Otherwise I have to be in the uniform until four in the afternoon. Working hours six till four.

Petar's use of 'working hours' is indicative of the commitment required from him alongside his studies, and this commitment interferes with his course progress. Petar says: 'I wouldn't recommend being a cadet and studying at the EEC to anyone, it's really difficult to balance'. The centrality of the cadet experience for Petar also comes across in his photographs. It is indicative that out of the thirty-four photographs he took as illustrative of his student experiences, none of them were of his faculty or anything related to his faculty. A selection of Petar's photographs are presented below.

Petar's case illustrates the interference of a student's conditions of existence (inherited and acquired) with study progress. His example refines the category of acquired capital, since not all acquired capital is necessarily beneficial but may interfere with the student's academic experience. Having to be a cadet in the Croatian army in order to study is an illustration of this negative aspect of acquiring capital, especially since this acquired capital depends on Petar's success: if Petar does not successfully progress through his course he has to return the money invested in his education as soon as he finds employment. On the other hand, Mili's case of a scholarship which does not need returning and provided student accommodation is a positive example of acquired capital. For students with high economic capital, like Danijela and Andrej, the opportunity to acquire capital is irrelevant at study level since they have inherited familial capital

to draw on. However, for students such as Mili and Petar, this opportunity is crucial if their habitus is to affect transformative educational practices.

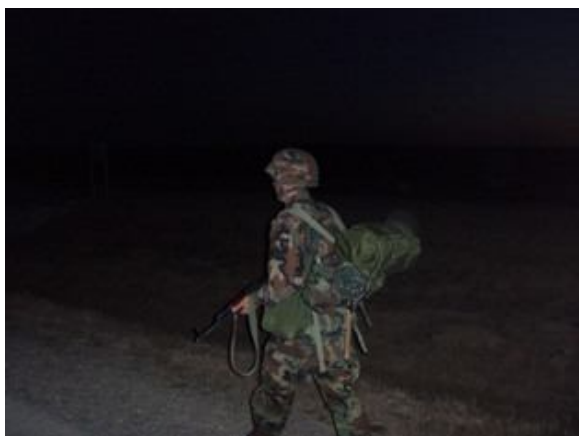


Figure 11.4 Selected examples of Petar's photographs.

Two final influences shaping student experiences and progress which will be addressed include personal lifestyle changes and conceptions of future employment. Whereas Danijela continued to live at home with her parents, Mili, Petar and Andrej experienced a change in private space. Mili says she got used to Zagreb quickly, but for her 'home is home'. One of the photographs Mili took shows her clothes and a bag and she explained this choice of scene as follows: 'I am not from Zagreb, so I have to travel a lot and people are always asking me why I have such a big suitcase' (see Figure 11.5). For students who come from Zagreb, as Danijela does, such images are not a regular part of their student experiences. Indeed, even in this respect her habitus is not under threat from any transformative moment such as a change in space.



Figure 11.5 Mili's room.

In this private space sense, student experiences also vary with regard to where students live. For example, Mili and Andrej live in student accommodation but whereas Mili indicated in her questionnaire that she was 'mostly dissatisfied' with her living arrangements, Andrej reported that he was extremely satisfied. Mili describes her experience as follows:

At first it was, I found it difficult to get used to. Shared bathrooms, small shared room, but now it's ok. Now I know everyone more or less, so I am used to it.

Initially Mili was dissatisfied with the accommodation and said it was difficult to study in a shared student room, but then she got used to it. On the other hand, Andrej is extremely satisfied in student dorms because he enjoys the social life it provides. In addition, student accommodation is not a new experience for Andrej since he went to a secondary boarding school which he said contributed to his quick adaptation. For the three students living away from home, this change in

lifestyle means independence. For example, Petar says: 'I'm more independent, I respect more what my parents have given me so far. I now know what it means'. In addition, Petar's impression is that 'many of my colleagues would like to...because it's like going to secondary or primary school for them, they're home all the time, so they'd like to be away from their house and parents for a while'. In this extract, Petar recognizes how for those students who stayed at home the lifestyle change has not been as significant. In other words, student experiences also vary according to students' private spaces, where aspects of their habitus continue to be reinforced and/or transformed. In general, as indicated in the chapter on residential status, the interviews suggested that adapting to university life was easier for students who stayed at home living with their parents.

Conceptions of future employment also influence student experiences. This finding resonates with Quinn et al.'s (2005) research which showed that students' failure to see a link between their course and a future career contributed to students leaving their courses. According to Crozier et al. (2008): 'The "players" or students in our study thus need strategies and resources and dispositions to "play". They also need commitment and acceptance that the game is worth "playing" or as Bourdieu terms it, "illusio" (p.168). In relation to future job opportunities, it is argued that clear occupational images can provide such 'illusio'.

In this study, students who had a clear occupational image and were studying at a faculty which they felt would enable them to pursue such an image experienced their course differently to those who did not. Danijela is a medical student who has such a clear image. She says:

I'm interested in molecular biology and working in scientific institutes, research, working on receptors. I have a good idea of what I want to do...I'm interested in cancer research and HIV more than clinical work which isn't really typical for the Faculty of Medicine, it's usually surgery or internal medicine, surgery for men and ambitious women.

Danijela hints here at the gendered aspect of specializations in medicine mentioned in Chapter 9, which she attributes to what she calls 'social pressure'. This is another example of socially defined assumptions about masculinity and femininity and the way in which they are professionally perpetuated. However, Danijela also demonstrates a clear occupational path. For her, studying medicine is a contribution to this career path and she is already hoping for a scholarship called 'women in science'. This is a scholarship her mother had found out about: 'My mum knows

about it, she told me, she looks at such sites'. Thus Danijela's habitus continues to be shaped by her inherited cultural capital with regard to future job opportunities.

Unlike Danijela, Mili is less sure about her future career. She says: 'I don't know. I am just afraid of being in suits, going to work, from work, being serious. I'm afraid of that, I don't want to be like that'. In other words, Mili knows what she does not want but is also not sure what she wants. She enrolls into the mathematics course because this is what she was good at in school; however, during her exams she says: 'I just felt I didn't want to study mathematics, that I wasn't interested in it'. Unlike Danijela, who may not be interested in all her subjects but sees the utility of her course, Mili does not have a clear professional future she is moving towards, which makes finding sense in the course more difficult for her.

A similar difference can also be observed in Petar's and Andrej's cases. Whereas Petar sees completing his course as enabling him to get a job in the army or in the computing industry, Andrej is less sure about the professional outcomes of his course. He says that when he enrolled into the course:

I thought, geology, what is that? I wasn't clear what it was...but then I became interested...speleology, underground waters, caves...I want something a bit more social, I'd like to work with people rather than rocks...I'd like to be a speleologist, if only I could have a team with me.

When Andrej does not enrol into the second year, he starts working for a new daily newspaper. His response to the question whether he thought he would graduate at the MGO faculty was: 'I have some other plans, but we'll see with time...I'll try to get to the third year and then see whether I want to continue to the fourth year or whether I will enrol into a social sciences course'. In other words, Andrej is not as committed to his course as Danijela or Petar are. On the other hand, he shares a professional insecurity with Mili; however, unlike Mili who studies hard irrespective of this insecurity, Andrej's social life overruns the academic.

### *Possible outcomes*

According to Longden (2002), there are three possible outcomes of the association between a student and HE: (1) the student successfully completes the course, (2) the student fails to satisfy course requirements and is required to leave (involuntary departure) and (3) the student leaves

early without achieving the intended qualification aim (voluntary departure). Out of the 28 students interviewed, 18 students enrolled into the second year successfully, whereas 10 did not. Out of these 10 students, two exemplify voluntary departure. Interestingly, although grounded in a different cultural and HE setting, Yorke's (1998) quantitative research findings, which identified six factors influencing student non-completion (inability to cope with the demands of the programme, wrong choice of programme, financial difficulties, dissatisfaction with aspects of institutional provision, poor quality of the student experience and unhappiness with the social environment) resonate with the present study. All but the final factor were found to be relevant.

Although the reasons for non-enrolment are multi-layered and unique for each individual, three broad groups can be identified among the interviewed students. The first group comprises of Petar and two other students. These are students who, because of their low initial economic familial capital, have to acquire their own capital to be able to study, and this process interferes with their progress. For example, Melita's (FG, MGO) interference involves job obligations and Lovro's (FG, FTB) progress is threatened by cadet responsibilities, just as is Petar's (FG, EEC). Here financial difficulties override the academic focus. In addition, all three students struggle with first year mathematics as a result of previous schooling which is not compensated for through their present course. The habitus of these three students, which has the potential to affect a socially transformative educational biography, is constrained by objective conditions of existence; these students do not have the initial familial capital to support their progress and their own attempts to acquire the required capital interfere with study progress. These findings go against Simonova's (2003) or Galland and Oberti's (2000) research from the Czech Republic and France which suggested that the influence of social origin on educational success lessens the higher an individual has worked his/her way up through the educational system.

The second group also comprises three students: Andrej (SG, MGO), Ružica (SG, MGO) and Nino (SG, EEC). Unlike the first group which consists of three first generation students whose progress is hindered by financial struggles, this group comprises three second generation students for whom the social aspects of studying override the academic ones. In other words, although there is no quantitative difference between these two groups of students with regard to progress, a qualitative difference can be observed in relation to the reasons for unsuccessful progress. In Andrej's and Ružica's cases, this social orientation can also be accounted for by their insecurities related to their choice of course regarding possible professions. Indeed, both these students seemed to be more drawn to the social sciences, so in their cases a contributing factor to

unsuccessful continuation is wrong choice of programme. This is reflected in Andrej taking up work as a journalist and Ružica transferring to a private business school. In Ružica's case, wrong choice of programme is also related to her perception that the jobs the MGO qualifies her for are more appropriate for men. In addition, both students recognize the poor quality of their faculty's organisation.

Importantly, according to Hodkinson and Bloomer (2001), one of the assumptions made about non-completion is that it is a negative practice. Although this study does not refer to non-completion but rather to unsuccessful enrolment into the second year of study, Andrej's and Ružica's examples illustrate how non-completion can be a positive practice. Their cases exemplify voluntary departure that involves pursuing an area they are more interested in. Nino, on the other hand, explains that he did not study enough; his plan is to stay at the EEC and retake exams.

Finally, the third group slightly overlaps with the first group. It consists of four students (Lana, Matilda, Damir and Marijana) who do not seem to be able to cope with the academic requirements of their courses. What these four students have in common is a poor secondary school foundation in mathematics; however, they differ from the first group in that they do not have professional obligations weighing on their educational experiences. Ivana (FG, FTB), Matilda (FG, EEC) and Marijana (SG, MAT) completed a secondary vocational school<sup>51</sup> and they do not enrol into the second year because they fail their mathematics exams. Damir's (SG, MAT) case is similar in that although he completed a grammar school, he cannot cope with the mathematics requirement. Such an influence of entry qualifications has also been identified in UK research (e.g. Longden 2002).

According to Hodkinson and Bloomer (2001), another assumption made about non-completion is that its causes lie within the institution's control and influence. It is argued here that this assumption is less convincing for Andrej's, Ružica's and Nino's cases, but stands as convincing for the seven students who struggle as a result of financial and educational difficulties. In Melita's, Lovro's and Petar's cases, full funding which does not involve non-academic obligations could enable these students to focus on their studies. In addition, institutional recognition of different levels of previous knowledge through extra practical and moral support could help students overcome drawbacks from their previous schooling.

---

<sup>51</sup> Although Marijana has been classified as a second generation student because her father has completed professional higher education, it is important to note that her mother has also completed secondary vocational schooling.

The findings of this study challenge individualistic explanations of study progress such as those identified in Bouillet and Gvozdanović's (2008) study. The authors found that out of 325 surveyed students at the University of Zagreb, 50.2 per cent of students explained low completion rates as related to personal characteristics (e.g. laziness, lack of motivation, lack of determination and health issues). Such 'personalised' explanations (e.g. intelligence, course interest, talent, determination and hard work) were also listed by several of the interviewed students in this research. In addition, personal characteristics were also cited as the main factor influencing non-completion by some of the interviewed lecturers. For example, two MED lecturers explained non-completion in terms of lack of determination. One of them said: 'no one gives up on the medical course. Everyone graduates in medicine, those who don't have to be seriously ill'. A MAT and FTB lecturer mention that a large number of students enrol into their courses without an intention to complete them. Furthermore, an EEC lecturer explains low completion rates in terms of poor secondary schooling, without recognizing the faculty's role in reinforcing previous educational experiences. However, one of the interviewed lecturers from the MGO faculty, in addition to identifying student motivation as an explanation for non-completion, also recognized that the workload may be too demanding and that not all students may have appropriate learning facilities: 'can they or can't they learn at home? At the faculty that would be difficult. There's nowhere'.

Bourdieu stated in *Distinction* (1984) that: 'Misrecognition of the social determinants of the educational career – and therefore of the social trajectory it helps to determine – gives the educational certificate the value of a natural right and makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order' (p.387). This study shows that students struggle not only because of their low initial volumes of capital but also because the fields with which they interact do not have a transformative contribution but rather reinforce initial capitals; the students are let down by the fields that surround them: their faculties in particular and the system of HE support in general. In this context of external circumstances impinging on progress, it seems inappropriate to take a voluntarist perspective on educational practices which celebrates: 'flexible selves, permeable or semi-permeable boundaries, the journey traversed rather than origins or lasting determinations' (Fowler 2000, p. 30). As Charlesworth (2000) notes, there are forces which deny the possibility of being anything else than one is.

This chapter has sketched the HE pathways (continuation to HE, choice of university and course, experiences and progress) of four students occupying different social positions with the

aim of highlighting general differences between them. The addressed differences have already been discussed in previous chapters of this thesis; however, this chapter has attempted to draw them more specifically together through Bourdieu's theory of practice as a relatively holistic, relational framework encompassing habitus, capital and field. The interrelationship between these concepts was taken as having the potential not only to explain examples of social reproduction but also instances of social change. To illustrate this, two students whose educational paths seemed to indicate social reproduction were selected (Danijela and Andrej), as well as two students whose educational paths suggested social change (Mili and Petar).

Spelling out the theory of practice required identifying aspects of capitals shaping habitus (cultural, economic and social) as well as aspects of the fields the students interact with (past, present and future) that act as habitus reinforcing or transforming forces. In addition, it required a more detailed examination of educational institutions operating within fields and their properties. This examination included identifying the symbolic capital associated with particular institutions, as well as the inclusive or exclusive practices of their institutional habituses. The institutional practices shaping the workings of educational dispositions included: secondary school professional orientation or lack of it, course organisation, assessment practices, teacher-student relationship and course difficulty.

It was argued in the chapter that examples of transformative practices can be related primarily to the fields students interact with, which act as sources of capital that (re)shape their habitus, which in turn influences their practice. The emphasis has been on 'transformative aspects' rather than a 'transformed habitus' because: a. there is an essentialist tone to the concept of a 'transformed habitus' which is seen as incompatible with Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and b. examples were provided where although educational practice at one level indicated transformation (e.g. Petar's continuation to HE), at another level it indicated reproduction (e.g. Petar's unsuccessful entry into the second year).

Furthermore, it was suggested that a conception of agency which might be associated with transformative practice is closely interlinked with an individual's conditions of existence rather than just individual will; Bourdieu (1984) refers to the emphasis on individual will as 'interactionist- and typically petit-bourgeois – social idealism' (p.253). However, rather than seeing this constrained agency pessimistically, the argument advanced is that educational fields should be developed to encourage transformative practices.

The crucial problem that remains is how to develop fields as beneficial for the socially less privileged members of society. Currently, the system presents itself as treating all students as equals (e.g. if there is no professional advice in secondary school then no one benefits from it, privileged or underprivileged). However, by doing so, the system tends to implicitly privilege the socially privileged who do not need to acquire capital in order to progress since they have initial capital to draw upon (e.g. advice from parents who have completed HE themselves). Such symbolic violence in the higher education field contributes to social reproduction.

Contributions from the educational field to this extent might include: educational and career advice in lower levels of education, needs-based scholarships, sufficient student accommodation for under-represented groups, teachers who do not assume prior knowledge, fair assessment, mentoring schemes, satisfactory faculty organisation and equipment, and realistic academic expectations.

**CONCLUSION:  
SURVIVAL OF THE WEAKEST?**

### *Study implications: empirical and practical*

Two young fish are swimming along and they meet an older fish swimming in the opposite direction. The older fish nods at them and says: 'Morning! How's the water?' The two young fish greet him back and then, after swimming on for a while, one of them looks over at the other and says, 'So, what's water?' The anecdote's point is that sometimes what is the most obvious part of our lives is also the most difficult to notice; this resonates with Bourdieu's (e.g.1979) general claim that educational inequalities most often remain unnoticed.

The central theme of this study has been to 'notice' and explain how social differences play out in relation to young people's HE pathways, i.e. how higher education choices are shaped for students from different social backgrounds in a Croatian higher education setting and how these students experience their first year of study and progress through it. The analysis presented in this study shows that the answer to this question is complex. That is, the study empirically identified an interrelated web of influences as shaping students' educational pathways (see Appendix 9 for summary of findings): inherited or acquired capitals (cultural, social, economic and emotional), gender, and fields of the past (secondary education field), present (HE field) and future (labour market); the overall conclusion has been that institutional practices educationally reinforce social differences through their (mis)recognition of resources which are unevenly distributed among students. This conclusion challenges individualistic explanations of student pathways which associate educational practices with personal characteristics. The identified influences were separately discussed in Chapters 5 to 10 in order to scrutinize the details of their workings, whereas Part 3 of the thesis highlighted their interrelationship and personalized their cumulative effect by discussing the HE pathways of four students.

With regard to continuing to HE, it was suggested that for second generation students HE continuation involves an expected continuation of their family's educational history, whereas for first generation students it involves a break with it. Importantly, this 'naturalness' to continue to HE for second generation students is reinforced by these students' secondary schooling: the majority of them attended a secondary grammar school which is the expected route into HE. In contrast, students with vocational schooling, the less expected route, tended to be first generation students. Furthermore, unlike second generation students who could draw on HE advice from their parents, first generation students had to rely on advice from their acquired contacts when deciding whether to continue to HE. Judging by the profile of the student body in terms of how they estimate their family's financial status, continuing to HE is a less probable scenario for those

who estimate their family's financial status as 'bad' or 'very bad'. Within these financial categories, HE continuation is a more probable option for students from poorer backgrounds who live in or near the university city in comparison to those who would have to move for study purposes. Also, employment opportunities were identified as an important motivator for students to continue to higher education irrespective of their social background. Lack of institutional provision of educational advice in lower levels of education, limited needs-based scholarships, and admission procedures based on grammar school content were identified as some of the ways in which institutions reinforce social differences with regard to HE continuation.

Turning to choice of university and course, the symbolic capital attributed to the University of Zagreb was identified as influencing students' choices to study there irrespective of social background. It was recognised that this symbolic capital was not based on social criteria, but rather on perceived quality and tradition. However, in the example of MED, where 'prestige' was also attributed on the basis of social criteria, it was concluded that this could act as both a motivating and de-motivating influence on choice of course. Furthermore, examples were identified where students enrolled into the same course as one of their parents, further specifying the 'naturalness' to continue to higher education for second generation students. As with continuing to HE, first generation students had to rely on acquired extra-familial contacts for educational advice. In addition, grammar schooling was identified as not only the 'expected' route to HE, but also a preferable route for some faculties rather than others. For example, the highest proportion of grammar school students was at MED, whereas the lowest at MGO. Apart from attended secondary schooling, restrictions to course choices were also financially shaped: a student chooses to enrol into a shorter and less demanding programme in order to be able to balance work and study responsibilities. As with the decision to continue to higher education, perceived employment opportunities were identified as influencing choice of course; however, a gender dimension could be observed with regard to students' motivation: male students were more likely to choose the 'employment' option and female students the 'course interest' option. In addition, gender stereotypical constructions of courses and labour market opportunities were identified as influencing course choice. Again, lack of educational advice in lower levels of schooling and lack of institutional provision of financial support were identified as some of the ways in which social differences are reinforced with regard to course choice.

Finally, the following influences were identified as shaping differential course experiences and progress: second generation students who can be academically supported by their parents were

identified as advantaged in comparison to their colleagues without such educational support; students who had attended grammar schooling tended to feel better prepared for university studies with regard to content and study skills when compared to their colleagues who attended vocational schooling; positive student experiences and progress was also associated with opportunities to exchange materials with colleagues, to study together, sign each other into classes and 'meet' in virtual spaces. Furthermore, financial difficulties were identified as negatively impacting progress, particularly for students living away from home. Student experiences were also identified as shaped by living arrangements: living in student accommodation was described as providing a richer social life in comparison to living with one's family, though the latter was identified as more conducive to studying; and a difference was observed between students from Zagreb and those who have moved to Zagreb for study purposes: for the latter group, the student experience involved wide ranging personal changes. Clear occupational images or perceived employment opportunities were recognised as contributing to course commitment; and this included the students' gender construction of future career. In addition to these influences, the study identified various institutional influences which negatively affected study experiences: gender biased marking, sexist remarks by a teacher, hierarchical and unsupportive academic environments, teacher assumptions of previous knowledge, large amounts of content, poor organisation and timetabling and poor faculty resources. Seven out of the ten students who did not enrol into the second year struggled as a result of financial and educational (previous schooling) difficulties. Five of these students were first generation students. Full funding which does not involve non-academic obligations could have enabled students to focus on their studies, whereas institutional recognition of different levels of previous knowledge through extra practical and moral support could have helped them overcome drawbacks from their previous schooling.

A practical implication of identifying multiple influences shaping student pathways is that a holistic approach is required to address such influences; just focusing on economic capital or cultural capital reveals only part of the inequalities puzzle. It is suggested that for the 'weakest to survive' an amalgam of different practices needs to be put into place in order to trump their disadvantaged position. These practices have been identified as: tailored educational and career advice in primary and secondary schools; institutional provision of both 'cold' and 'hot' knowledge about educational careers; student record books without information on secondary school completed; teaching staff sensitive to different educational backgrounds; objective assessment; measures to prevent corruption; institutional opportunities for meeting colleagues and working with them (e.g. induction days, collaborative learning); virtual meeting spaces;

teacher-student mentoring schemes; sufficient numbers of needs-based scholarships; student loans; well equipped libraries; internet provision of resources; sufficient and adequate student accommodation; provision of quiet spaces for learning; orientation advice at induction sessions; career orientation before enrolling to university and during the course of study, with particular attention to the gender dimension of educational and career choices; opportunity for direct contact with helpful and supportive academic staff; clarity in course transmission; professional development of teaching staff; implemented procedures to follow student progress; encouragement with regard to course difficulty; and good organisation.

*Study implications: theory and policy*

Similarly to Grenfell and James's (1998) claim, this study's theoretical lens has been both modest and ambitious: modest because 'it can hardly do justice to Bourdieu's voluminous writings and the very many sophisticated points of detail he has made regarding education over almost four decades of writing about it' (p.2), and ambitious because it is based on a conviction 'that research in terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice offers insights and understandings not readily visible in other approaches' (p.2). This study's theoretical contribution pertains to the use of Bourdieu's concepts such as habitus, cultural capital, social capital and field in a Croatian HE context which is new to the higher education participation research field. The exploration of these concepts through data collected in a Croatian HE setting has resulted in their empirical revision and extension.

Grenfell and James's (1998) point can also be made with regard to the study's design: it is modest in that it neither offers an in-depth, ethnographic exploration of student practices, nor does it give sophisticated quantitative analyses of trends. However, it is ambitious in its aim to provide a valuable contribution to the methodologies of HE participation research by encompassing both individual experiences and group patterns. The data gathered and analysed in this study is a contribution to not only scarce Croatian HE participation research but also international research in this area of study, as outlined in Chapter 2.

Theoretically this study has retained Bourdieu's classification of the three forms of cultural capital: institutionalised, objectified and embodied. It was found that the variants of cultural capital identified in the research were not always necessarily inherited as Bourdieu suggested but were also individually generated; however, it provided examples that support Bourdieu's

contention that variants of cultural capital can reinforce each other, as well as reinforce other forms of capital. The analysis also showed both implicit and explicit institutional recognition of cultural capital, i.e. its recognition not only through common formal standards, which position some students ahead of others, but also through informal practices. In addition, cultural capital was identified as having gradations, i.e. as being not just a matter of possession or non-possession. Finally, possession of cultural capital was identified as not always having positive repercussions but also as having its drawbacks (e.g. son/daughter of a doctor considered snobbish by colleagues). The study empirically identified cultural capital in its institutionalised state (parental educational level, parental educational support and type of completed secondary schooling), its objectified state (study materials) and its linguistic state (vocabulary and eloquence). Lack of institutional provision of educational advice, as well as study resources, was identified as reinforcing student differentiation according to cultural capital (non)possession. In addition, examples of teachers assuming grammar school knowledge, together with those explicitly (mis)recognizing it during oral exams, were identified as discriminatory practices.

Social capital as encompassing extra-familial relationships, its interrelationship with other forms of capital in creating and reproducing inequalities, and the role of 'durable networks' in furthering the privileges of the already socially privileged was also evident in this study. However, the research elaborated on Bourdieu's conceptualization by going beyond the overall 'volume' aspect of social capital and acknowledging the educational weight of 'serendipitous' social contacts; it highlighted instances of educationally beneficial extra-familial contacts which have weaker ties, not all of which are necessarily underlined by Bourdieu's assumption of reciprocity. In this sense, the study contributed to identifying sources and resources that encourage social mobility rather than just determine social reproduction. Potential or actual sources of social capital were identified as adults beyond the immediate family, such as family friends, a tennis partner, career advisor and teachers, as well as course colleagues and friends. The beneficial resources they yielded included educational advice, job advice and employment opportunities, financial benefits, study materials, educational knowledge, and practical and emotional support. In addition, virtual spaces were identified as democratising social ties. Whereas second generation students could draw on existing social contacts, there was a serendipitous aspect to the educationally valuable social contacts of first generation students. As a result of this misbalance, lack of institutional provision of educationally useful social contacts and resources was identified as reinforcing social inequalities.

The concept of economic capital was addressed both in its objectified and embodied form. With regard to the former, the distinction between students living at home and away was identified as particularly relevant for understanding student experiences, since non-fee paying students living at home, irrespective of their family's financial means, did not seem to have substantial financial concerns weighing on their progress, whereas students living away from home who estimated their family's income as 'bad' or 'very bad' experienced financial difficulties that resulted in unsuccessful progress. Economic distinctions were also recognised through markers such as clothes, transport, mobile phones and lap-tops. The economic capital lens identified the crucial role of family support in the Croatian context. It illustrated how choice of HE course can be restricted for students with lower levels of financial means and identified the weight of costs internal to the institution, such as tuition fees and study materials, as well as external costs especially significant for students living away from home. It also showed how financial struggles lead students to undertake employment or military obligations, which negatively interfered with their course progress.

A cultural aspect of student experiences in relation to place was also identified in the study. Unlike quoted UK research, the findings in this study suggested that, where possible, students were more likely to choose to live at home with their parents over living away for the duration of their study, irrespective of socio-economic background. The concept of place was used to capture the general differences identified in the experiences of students staying at home and living away, as well as the nuances observed within the 'living away' category between those students who were in student accommodation as opposed to those in private accommodation. Living at home was identified as perpetuating dependence but also as contributing to a smoother transition to HE. Students in university accommodation tended to report a richer social life, but private accommodation was portrayed as more conducive to one's studies. In the 'living away' category, type of living arrangement was identified as associated with students' financial means. In addition, public spaces were identified by certain students as contributing to their overall university experience.

The concept of field was empirically operationalised in this study to encompass the interrelationship between the labour market field (field of the future), HE field (field of the present) and secondary education field (field of the past) in shaping student choices and experiences. More specifically, a labour market effect was identified with regard to students' decisions to continue to HE and to choose particular university courses. This labour market

influence was seen in relation to the position of the University of Zagreb as the dominant 'player' in the HE field, as well as to its contribution to gendered course choices. This section's theoretical contribution resulted from the illustration of interrelated fields and their effects, as well as the development of the concept of gender habitus and gendered aspects of institutional habitus.

With regard to the concept of 'institutional habitus', the study retained Reay et al.'s (2005, 2001) identification of 'classed' aspects of institutional habitus at secondary school level as organisational practices, cultural and expressive characteristics, curriculum offer and educational status. It was argued that the institutional habituses of the case study faculties could not be assigned to categories such as 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' institutional habitus (e.g. Thomas 2002). Rather, the institutional habitus of each faculty was identified as shaped by both inclusive and exclusive practices and characteristics. Inclusive aspects of institutional habitus were identified as: career advice, opportunity for direct contact with helpful and supportive academic staff (preferably face-to-face, but also via e-mail), monitoring of student progress, lecturer sensitivity to differences in prior knowledge, clarity in course transmission, encouragement with regard to course difficulty, objective assessment, good organisation and availability of resources, as well as a socially mixed student intake. On the other hand, exclusive aspects of institutional habituses were identified as: admission procedures based on the grammar school programme, entrance exam including 'general culture' questions, academic staff offering private tutoring to applicants, unsupportive lecturers, assumptions of prior knowledge, unclear transmission of course content, subjective assessment, overcrowded timetable, lack of resources and a socially homogenous student intake. Such exclusive practices were identified as perpetuating social inequalities in education.

Finally, Bourdieu's theory of practice was empirically 'activated' in order to explore student pathways through the interrelationship between different capitals, habitus, fields and gender. On a theoretical level, it was suggested that it might be more appropriate to refer to aspects of habitus as transformative rather than a transformed habitus (e.g. Bourdieu 1984); the latter was identified as having essentialist rather than relational connotations. Furthermore, it was argued that the workings of habitus cannot be understood only in terms of different capitals; gender and fields were also identified as reinforcing and converting different aspects of habitus. It was concluded that Bourdieu's theory of practice can account for social change if the fields act as dynamic rather than static 'spaces'. In relation to this, it was also suggested that agency is closely

interlinked with an individual's inherited or acquired conditions of existence rather than just individual will.

On an empirical note, students with initial capital as inherited from their families were identified as 'the fittest', since they did not have to rely on secondary fields as sources of capital shaping their educational dispositions. On the other hand, in the case of students with low initial capitals, examples of transformative practices were related primarily to the fields they interacted with, which acted as sources of capital that shaped aspects of their habitus, which in turn influenced their educational practice. However, it was more often the case that fields reinforced existing capitals rather than providing new ones. It was concluded that there were more examples of educational practices illustrative of social reproduction rather than of change.

Finally, the opening chapter of this thesis located the study in an HE context undergoing Bologna process reforms. It was suggested that its 'social dimension', emphasizing equal access, progress and completion opportunities in HE with particular focus on socio-economically disadvantaged students, had been neglected in the Croatian context. The results of this study suggest that such negligence is in itself socially unjust. First generation students, students who attended vocational schooling, who do not receive adequate academic support during their studies, who have financial difficulties and inadequate living and learning conditions do not have the same educational opportunities as second generation students, students who attended grammar schooling, students who receive adequate academic support during their studies, those who do not have financial difficulties and who have adequate living and learning conditions. In addition, the 'social dimension' as spelled out in Bologna documents includes measures such as 'appropriate studying and living conditions' (Berlin Communiqué 2003). This study's findings suggest that supporting socio-economically disadvantaged students to successfully access, progress and complete their studies requires a more sensitive understanding of their circumstances than the one displayed in Bologna policy documents. To this extent, the practical implications of this study as listed above are a contribution to a more complex verbalizing of the 'social dimension' in the Croatian HE context.

#### *Study limitations and emerging themes for further research*

In order to produce a theoretically sound, methodologically rigorous and ethically sensitive study, considerations were made throughout the research on all three of these levels. However, despite

such efforts, the study has a number of apparent limitations. Firstly, the six case study faculties were selected according to retention rates, which lead to the sampling of only certain fields of study, i.e. technology, engineering, science, medicine and design. Although these cases provided a wealth of data for exploring ways in which institutions reinforce (dis)advantage, the inclusion of a faculty from the field of social sciences and humanities might have provided new insights. For example, the study's research findings suggested that cultural capital in its embodied form did not figure prominently in students' experiences at the case study faculties, yet students suggested it might have a greater influence at faculties such as the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Philosophy. Informed by this, future research could explore institutional recognition of particular resources by field of study and examine how Bourdieu's theoretical framework accounts for possible differences. In relation to institutional selection, future research could also extend the comparative lens to include different routes of study, as well as other Croatian universities. For instance, it would be interesting to examine how choices and experiences are shaped for students on vocational HE courses, as opposed to the academic courses examined in this study, as well as whether there is a difference in the social profile of students at different Croatian universities and if so, why.

A further limitation of this study which pertains to institutional selection relates to the number of faculties selected. Since higher education participation is an under-researched topic in Croatia, a multiple case study approach was deemed as appropriate since it provides a balance between a broad sweep and detailed observations. However, as a result, the research necessarily lacks the depth provided by ethnographic studies, as well as the breadth of generalizable quantitative data in order to more convincingly inform policy. Future higher education participation research in Croatia could benefit from both, especially if the two approaches inform each other.

Three final limitations will be recognized here. The first relates to the timing of the questionnaire. For practical reasons it was not possible to administer the questionnaire at the beginning of the academic year, which meant that the students who participated in the study were not those students most at-risk of leaving the course early. It is suggested that for a more complete picture of the student body and how students progress, similar research should aim to start as early as possible in the academic year and take a longitudinal perspective. The second limitation pertains to the study's dichotomous use of first and second generation students. Since this is the first study in Croatia to qualitatively explore student choices and experiences, these categories were used to identify general differences between students. However, future research should take this

as a starting point and develop a more nuanced appreciation of how parents' educational levels shape student pathways. Finally, the third limitation relates to the study's analysis of gender and student pathways. Although gender has been identified and discussed in the thesis (e.g. in relation to the labour market field, gender appropriateness of the course or bias at oral exams), the scope of this thesis has limited the concept's analytical potential. This relates in particular to gender identity issues at faculties where there is a significant gender majority. Such sites could be particularly productive for a more complex exploration of the Butler-Bourdieu debate mentioned in this thesis.

Other emerging themes for future research include: exploring how students choose secondary school routes (this study suggested that such early choices impact on student pathways), class analysis (the study showed a relationship between educational level and taste) and developing sociological theorising on social differences in education particularly with respect to the educational system's neo-liberal tendencies and individualization discourse. Finally, an issue raised in the study which deserves further attention was mentioned by Bartol (SG, DES): he said how when his male secondary school colleagues were discussing design as a study option many of them said they would not consider the course because it was 'gay'. Therefore, sexuality and how it can contribute to HE choices and experiences is a topic which appears to merit further sociological scrutiny.

#### *A final note*

In April and May of 2009, student protests were organised in Croatia against the commercialisation of higher education. The protests were portrayed in the media as the first significant student protests since the late 1960's 'Spring' revolution. The focal point of the protests was the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Philosophy, where for several weeks the students replaced their formal lectures with a series of talks, video projections and workshops, many of which problematised the impact of neo-liberalism on everyday life. In the field of HE education, the focus was on decreased public spending for education, which launched the issue of social inequalities in education into public debate. Banners such as: 'Luckily we're all rich. Or are we?', 'We have nothing to lose but our tuition fees' and 'Money into education not the army' illustrate the general tone of the protests.

When I began this study, my motivation for it was not only theoretical and empirical curiosity but also a drive to contribute to minimizing social inequalities in and through education in an informed manner. Using preliminary findings from my research, I had published two articles (Doolan, March 2008; Doolan and Matković, September 2008) for a Croatian on-line magazine as part of a campaign called 'Rights to Education' and these articles were noticed by student activists who invited me to talk about my research at the Faculty of Philosophy during the protests. In this sense, the study has been 'activated' in a campaign for a more socially sensitive system of higher education: one in which the 'weakest survive'.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1: DATA ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE CROATIAN STUDENT BODY BY FATHER'S  
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND BY GENDER**

**1.1 Composition of the Croatian student body by father's educational level at academic study courses.**

Father's educational level according to academic study type (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, author's calculation).

Academic year	Academic study total	Up to secondary schooling	Secondary schooling	Higher education	Missing
2001/2002	69263	5.2%	46.9%	46%	1.9%
2002/2003	72279	5.2%	48.1%	45.2%	1.5%
2003/2004	74677	4.7%	47.5%	43.9%	3.9%
2004/2005	78298	5.2%	49.6%	42.6%	2.6%
2005/2006	84945	5.2%	51.3%	41.6%	1.9%
2006/2007	90902	5%	52.8%	40.5%	1.7%

**1.2 Composition of the Croatian student body by father's educational level at vocational study courses.**

Father's educational level according to vocational study type (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, author's calculation).

Academic year	Vocational study total	Up to secondary schooling	Secondary schooling	Higher education	Missing
2001/2002	7020	12%	59.6%	25.8%	2.6%
2002/2003	10120	11.1%	59.3%	26.9%	2.7%
2003/2004	15931	10.7%	59%	24.9%	5.4%
2004/2005	21777	11.3%	60.7%	24.9%	3.1%
2005/2006	19366	10.5%	62.1%	24%	3.4%
2006/2007	16639	10.1%	64.8%	22.9%	2.2%

### 1.3 Composition of the Croatian student body by gender.

Gender composition of the student body (OECD 2006).

Academic year	Total number of students	No. of female students	(%)
1992/93	77 689	37 358	48%
1993/94	82 361	39 239	47.6%
1994/95	82 251	40 362	49%
1995/96	86 357	42 117	48.7%
1996/97	85 752	43 563	50.8%
1997/98	90 021	45 291	50.3%
1998/99	91 874	48 704	53%
1999/00	96 798	51 021	52.7%
2000/01	100 297	52 680	52.5%
2001/02	107 911	56 797	52.6%
2002/03	116 434	62 200	53.4%
2003/04	120 822	64 957	53.7%

## APPENDIX 2: CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING FACULTY ACCESS

### 2.1 Content of letter requesting permission to research at the faculty



INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL  
RESEARCH IN ZAGREB  
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
AMRUSEVA 11, 10000 ZAGREB, CROATIA  
TEL. ++ 385 (0)1 4883550 FAX. ++ 385 (0)1 48 28 910



Head of the Faculty  
(Name)  
Address

17 January 2007

Dear x,

As part of the research project 'European standards in higher education and the Croatian higher education system', carried out at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Centre for Educational Research and Development, as well as my own PhD research at the University of Cambridge, UK, I am carrying out a research study examining the choices and experiences of first year students at faculties within the University of Zagreb. The policy background for the research is the 'social dimension' of the Bologna process in Croatia and the research at each faculty would consist of the following:

- A questionnaire administered to first year students in January 2007;
- Interviews with four students in their first year of study and interviews with two of their teachers at the faculty in the second year of study in the academic year 2006/2007;
- A questionnaire for second year students administered in October 2007 at the same faculties.

Filling in the questionnaire is voluntary, as is taking part in the interviews, and the collected data will remain confidential.

I was wondering whether it would be possible to carry out this study at your faculty. If so, I would be grateful if you could confirm this and I would also appreciate if you could help me with organising the questionnaire administration in January 2007. Filling in the questionnaire should last for about 20 minutes and it is necessary to include as many first year students as possible. Therefore, it would be ideal if the questionnaire could be administered at a lecture which is compulsory for first year students.

If you have any queries regarding this study please feel free to contact me for any clarification or further information ([karin@idi.hr](mailto:karin@idi.hr), 01/4883 550).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher

Director of the Centre for  
Educational Research and  
Development

Karin Doolan

Dr.sc. Branislava Baranović

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION ABOUT SELECTED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

### 3.1 Selected students

Faculty	Pseudonym	Gender	Parents' educational level <sup>52</sup>	Estimation of family income <sup>53</sup>	Enrolled into the second year of study
1. MED	Fabijan	M	FG – both parents 4 year vocational school	Average	Yes
2. MED	Mladen	M	SG – both parents HE	Good	Yes
3. MED	Tea	F	SG – M- grammar school F – vocational HE	Average	Yes
4. MED	Rebeka	F	SG – M – vocational HE F – HE	Good	Yes
5. MED	Danijela	F	SG – M – HE F – PhD	Good	Yes
6. DES	Martin	M	FG – both parents 4 year vocational school	Good	Yes
7. DES	Bartol	M	SG – both parents HE	Good	Yes
8. DES	Katarina	F	FG – both parents 4 year vocational school	Good	Yes
9. DES	Mathea	F	SG – M – vocational HE F – 4 year vocational	Good	Yes
10. DES	Željka	F	SG – M – HE F - PhD	Average	Yes
11. EEC	Marko	M	FG – M – primary school F – 3 year vocational school	Good	Yes
12. EEC	Nino	M	SG – M – Masters F – vocational HE	Good	No
13. EEC	Petar	M	FG – both parents 4 year vocational school	Average	No
14. EEC	Jelena	F	FG – M – incomplete primary school F – 4 year vocational school	Very bad	Yes
15. EEC	Tanja	F	SG – M – HE F – PhD	Good	Yes
16. EEC	Matilda	F	FG – both parents 3 year vocational	Average	No

<sup>52</sup> The following options were provided: incomplete primary schooling, primary schooling, 3-year vocational school, 4-year vocational school, grammar school, vocational higher education, academic higher education, Masters and/or PhD.

<sup>53</sup> The following options were provided: extremely good (significantly above the national average), good (above the national average), average (around the national average), bad (below the national average), very bad (significantly below the national average).

Faculty	Pseudonym	Gender	Parents' educational level	Estimation of family income	Enrolled into the second year of study
17. FTB	Fran	M	FG - M – primary school F – 3 year vocational school	Average	Yes
18. FTB	Lovro	M	FG - 3 year vocational school	Very bad	No
19. FTB	Eli	F	SG - vocational HE	Good	Yes
20. FTB	Lana	F	FG – both parents primary school	Average	No
21. MGO	Andrej	M	SG – both parents HE	Good	No
22. MGO	Ružica	F	SG - M – HE F – 3 year vocational school	Good	No
23. MGO	Melita	F	FG - M – 4 year vocational F – 3 year vocational school	Average	No
24. MAT	Filip	M	SG – both parents HE	Good	Yes
25. MAT	Damir	M	SG - M – HE F – vocational HE	Bad	No
26. MAT	Mili	F	FG – both parents 3 year vocational	Average	Yes
27. MAT	Marijana	F	SG - M – 4 year vocational school F – vocational HE	Average	No
28. MAT	Sonja	F	SG – both parents PhD	Average	Yes

## APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL  
RESEARCH IN ZAGREB  
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
AMRUŠEVA 11, 10000 ZAGREB, CROATIA  
TEL. ++ 385 (0)1 4883550 FAX. ++ 385 (0)1 48 28 910



Zagreb, month, 2007

Dear student,

This interview is part of my PhD research which explores what influences students' choices of a particular course and how they experience their first year of study. I am conducting this research at the University of Zagreb in the academic year 2006/2007. A practical aim of the study is to identify recommendations, on the basis of your answers, for how to improve your course provision specifically, and studying at the University of Zagreb more generally.

This signed paper confirms that:

- You answers will be treated as confidential;
- You voluntarily agree to take part in the project.

Researcher's signature

Student's signature

## APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

### 5.1 Interview schedule for first interview with students

- Describe the research in more detail, what the interview will be about
- Confidentiality, pseudonyms, consent form
- Permission to record

Questions	Rationale
I'm interested in your story of how you ended up here. Why did you continue to higher education?	Starting point for exploring students' decisions to continue to HE and their choice of university and course. Encouraging students to narrate their educational pathway up to that point, encouraging specificities, particularly related to unpicking the emotional responses to the process. Address students' expectations, motivation, role of significant others and application procedures and experiences.
Why did you choose Zagreb University?	
Why this particular course?	
Did you consult anyone on these choices?	
Were these straightforward decisions for you? How sure were you that this was what you wanted?	
What did you think student life would be like?	
Could you describe the admissions process for me? How did you feel about it?	
Can you remember your first week at the faculty? How did you feel?	Examining students' initial experience of the course and how it differed from secondary school. Exploring the contribution previous educational experiences have to university experiences and examine whether there were any differences between secondary schools.
How did you experience the transition from secondary school to university? Extent of difference?	
I saw in your questionnaire that you do/do not feel that your secondary school has prepared you well for this course. Can you tell me a bit more about this?	
What is a typical day like for you as a student?	Exploring the academic-social balance.
What do you think about the course so far? Is it what you expected?	Addressing the academic aspects of the course – lectures, lecturers, workload, organisational aspects etc and how students respond to them.
Is there anything that you particularly like or dislike about your course? Why? How do you cope with the dislikes?	
What do your lectures look like? What are the lecturers like?	
How do you prepare for classes? Do you feel you have a lot of work to do?	
How would you describe your colleagues? How do you compare yourself to them? Do you feel supported by them?	Addressing the social aspects of studying, feelings of belonging or non-belonging, both socially and academically.
I saw in your questionnaire that you think this course is more appropriate for men/women/equally appropriate for both women and men. Can you tell me a bit more about this?	Exploring gendered constructions of faculties and whether they influence choice and progress.
Do you have any financial worries?	Examining the financial aspects of studying.
What is it like living at home/in student dorms etc.?	Examining private spaces and how they might influence course progress.
Do you feel that you have fitted in at your faculty?	Examining social and academic integration.
Would you say it is easier, more difficult or the same for you at this faculty if you compare yourself to your colleagues? Why?	Identifying bridges and barriers to participation which may not have been addressed.
Do you feel supported by your family and friends? In what way?	Identifying sources or lack of support and their impact on educational progress.
Have you thought at any point that you might leave the course? Why?	Identifying uncertainties related to the course.

## 5.2 Interview schedule for second interview with students

- Confidentiality, pseudonyms, consent form
- Permission to record

Questions	Rationale
What is your current student status at the faculty? What has contributed to this? (If the student has not successfully enrolled, what are your plans?)	Identifying whether or not the student has enrolled successfully into the second year of study and next short-term steps.
Could you talk me through your photographs?	Identifying aspects of students' experiences. Give them the opportunity to set the interview agenda.
How do you feel about your course so far? What have been the positive and what the negative aspects of student life? What would you change?	Exploring the overall impression of the previous academic year. Likes and dislikes. Recommendations for change.
What was expected from you last year? What do you think about these expectations?	Exploring course characteristics more specifically, including relationships with colleagues. Experiences of belonging-not belonging.
How do you feel about your lecturers?	
How do you feel about your colleagues? How similar or different are you from them? Do you think there is anything specific about students on your course?	
Where did you feel better, in secondary school or here? Why?	
Do you think that you have changed since secondary school? How?	Exploring change – positive and negative aspects of it.
How would you describe a successful student? How do you fare against this conception?	Identifying students' conceptions of successful students and their own self-image in this respect.
What do you think about these other faculties (show a list of the other case study faculties)? Would you ever consider any of them? Why? Do you think any of these are more appropriate for women or men?	Examining students' conceptions of other faculties in the study. Identifying stereotypes.
What do you expect from this year? Is there anything you are worried about or looking forward to in particular?	Examining future course plans – expectations of enrolment and what might influence this.
Do you think you will complete this course?	
Do you know people who did not enrol into the second year successfully? Why do you think this happened?	Examining how students construct course progress. Does it correspond to what the students who did not progress said?
Do you have an idea of what you would like to do after you complete your course?	Examining clarity of future career plans and whether this influences course commitment.
What are your associations when you hear the word 'class'?	Examining the relevance of this concept to how students see themselves and others.

### 5.3 Interview schedule for interview with lecturers

- *Describe the research in more detail, what the interview will be about*
- *Confidentiality, pseudonyms*
- *Permission to record*

Questions	Rationale
What does the Bologna process mean to you?	Identifying the educational policy context the lecturers work in and how it has affected them. Their experiences of the process and attitudes towards it.
What has changed for you as a lecturer since its implementation?	
How did the implementation develop at your faculty?	
What do you think was done well and what less well? What do you think should be the next step?	
What do you see as the strengths and what as the weakness of studying at your faculty?	Examining the lecturer's perspective on institutional characteristics. Comparing with the student perspective.
Who do you think enrolls into this course? What 'type' of student?	Examining possible social and academic stereotypes.
I have noticed that there is a majority of men/women at the faculty. How would you explain this?	Examining gender stereotypes.
Does the faculty keep track of students' progress in any way?	Identifying institutional practices in relation to student progress. How much importance does the institution place on retention? Examining how lecturers explain progress. Comparing with the student perspective.
Do you know what the retention rate is at this faculty? How do you explain this? Why do you think students leave the course?	
Do you know of any stereotypes about your faculty? What are they?	Examining the awareness lecturers have of how their faculty is perceived. Comparing with the student perspective.

## APPENDIX 6: FINAL CODING FRAME FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Identified themes	Codes
1. Secondary schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Choice</li> <li>1.2 Hierarchical images</li> <li>1.3 Impact on continuation to higher education</li> <li>1.4 Impact on content</li> <li>1.5 Impact on working habits</li> </ul>
2. Admission procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Direct entry into HE</li> <li>2.2 Process</li> <li>2.3 Private tutoring</li> <li>2.4 Value</li> </ul>
3. Cultural capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Embodied cultural capital</li> <li>3.2 Family experience of HE</li> <li>3.3 Family influence on continuation to HE</li> <li>3.4 Family influence on choice of HE course</li> <li>3.5 Parental educational support</li> </ul>
4. Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Connection for course entry</li> <li>4.2 Connection for student accommodation</li> <li>4.3 Connection for employment</li> <li>4.4 Course colleagues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.4.1 Academic</li> <li>4.4.2 Social</li> <li>4.4.3 Visual</li> </ul> </li> <li>4.5. Private group formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.5.1 Personality</li> <li>4.5.2 Music</li> <li>4.5.3 Intelligence</li> <li>4.5.4 Nationality</li> <li>4.5.5 Region</li> </ul> </li> <li>4.6 Friends</li> <li>4.7 Professional advisor</li> <li>4.8 Teacher</li> <li>4.9 The Jump</li> </ul>
5. Economic capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 Costs of study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1.1 Tuition fees</li> <li>5.1.2 Study materials</li> <li>5.1.3 Accommodation costs</li> <li>5.1.4 Cadet programme</li> </ul> </li> <li>5.2 Economic capital indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.2.1 Clothes</li> <li>5.2.2 Means of transport</li> <li>5.2.3 Free time activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>5.3 Economic capital affective dimension</li> <li>5.4 Economic capital associations</li> <li>5.5 Conceptions of class</li> </ul>

Identified themes	Codes
6. Place	6.1 Living at home 6.2 Living away from home 6.3 Travel 6.4 Faculty space 6.5 Difference in public spaces
7. Aspects of the course	7.1 Bologna process specific 7.2 Professors 7.3 Administrative staff 7.4 Equipment and information 7.5 Group size 7.6 Content 7.7 Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 Type</li> <li>7.2 Subjectivity/objectivity</li> <li>7.3 Possibility of cheating</li> <li>7.4 Importance of grades</li> </ul> 7.8 Academic group formation 7.9 Gender and the institution 7.10 First contact with the institution 7.11 Institutional climate
8. Perception of Zagreb University and its departments	8.1 In general 8.2 School of Design 8.3 Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing 8.4 Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology 8.5 Department of Mathematics 8.6 Faculty of Medicine 8.7 Faculty of Mining, Geology and Oil
9. Motivation	9.1 Interest 9.2 Finances 9.3 Employment opportunities
10. Future plans	10.1 Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10.1.1 Gender and employment</li> <li>10.1.2 Occupational image</li> </ul> 10.2 Graduate study
11. Explanations of educational (un) success	11.1 Academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.1.1 Intelligence</li> <li>11.1.2 Interest</li> <li>11.1.3 Luck</li> <li>11.1.4 Talent</li> <li>11.1.5 Determination</li> <li>11.1.6 Hard work</li> <li>11.1.7 Secondary schooling</li> </ul> 11.2 Non-academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.2.1 Finance</li> <li>11.2.2 Employment</li> <li>11.2.3 Health</li> <li>11.2.4 Other</li> </ul>
12. Miscellaneous	13.1 Conformism 13.2 Emotional capital 13.3 Attitudes to war veteran enrolment scheme 13.4 Student typicality 13.5 Student atypicality 13.6 Bologna process general



Institute for Social Research in Zagreb  
Centre for Educational Research and Development

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST YEAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Dear Student,

This questionnaire is part of a research study which explores students' higher education choices and experiences. The research is being carried out at the University of Zagreb, during the academic year 2006/2007. A general aim of the research is to develop recommendations on how to institutionally improve study experiences and your answers to this questionnaire will contribute to this aim.

The questionnaire is **anonymous**, and even though it is in the interest of the research project for you to answer every question, you can of course not answer the questions you do not wish to. In addition, your participation in filling in the questionnaire is **voluntary**. If you do not want to fill in the questionnaire please feel free to say so.

Finally, if you would be willing to take part in an informal talk about your student experiences with the researcher, could you please note that at the end of the questionnaire. In order to contact you, could you please leave a contact email address and/or phone number.

You can answer most of the questions just by marking the circle next to the chosen answer(s). However, in some cases questions are answered by writing in the provided box.

***Thank you in advance for your cooperation!***

### A. About your secondary schooling

#### 1. Which type of school did you complete? Please mark one circle.

Four-year vocational school. (Please write which one, e.g. economic, medical, technological-chemical etc.)

☐

Grammar school. (Please write which one, e.g. language, general, maths etc.)

☐

Art school. (Please write which one, e.g. music etc.)

☐

Some other school. (Please write which one.)

☐

#### 2. Where did you complete this school? Please mark one circle.

In Zagreb

☐

In a large city in  
Croatia apart  
from Zagreb

☐

In a small city in  
Croatia

☐

Abroad

☐

**3. What was your grade point average at the end of the fourth year of secondary schooling? Please mark one circle.**

2-2.49      2.5-3.49      3.5-4.49      4.5-5

☐                      ☐                      ☐                      ☐

**4. What overall grade did you get for your matura exam? Please mark one circle.**

2                      3                      4                      5

☐                      ☐                      ☐                      ☐

**5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Please mark one circle.**

**I completely disagree**      **I mostly disagree**      **I mostly agree**      **I completely agree**

On the basis of my student experiences so far, my secondary education has prepared me well for this course.

☐                      ☐                      ☐                      ☐

### B. About the course in general

**6. Which department do you study at?**

**6a. Do you think you are a typical student at your department?**

Yes                      No

☐                      ☐

**6b. Could you please elaborate your answer to Question 6a.**

**7. When was the first time when you enrolled in this course? Please mark one circle.**

Summer 2006      Summer 2005      Summer 2004 or earlier

☐                      ☐                      ☐

**9. Did you enrol through the war veteran scheme?**

Yes                      No

**8. What is your student status? Please mark one circle.**

Full-time non-paying      Full-time paying      Part-time

☐                      ☐                      ☐

☐                      ☐

**10. Did you have extra points on admission because of special knowledge and skills?**

Yes, knowledge of third foreign language.

☐

Yes, on the basis of my sports achievements.

☐

Yes, on the basis of my achievement at competitions in particular subjects.

☐

Yes, on the basis of a completed second secondary school, e.g. music school.

☐

Yes, but none of the above. Could you please write what this was?

☐

No.

☐

### C. About your decision to continue to higher education after secondary school

**11. Why did you decide to continue to higher education?**  
Please mark a maximum of THREE reasons.

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Because my family wanted me to.                                       | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because most of my friends continued to higher education.             | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because I think that a degree will increase my chances of employment. | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because I think that a degree will give me high status in society.    | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because I want to continue developing my intellectual capabilities.   | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because I didn't know what else to do.                                | <input type="radio"/> |
| Because I wanted to get student rights (e.g. healthcare).             | <input type="radio"/> |

**11a. Are there any other reasons why you decided to continue to higher education which were not mentioned in the previous question? What are they?**

**12. When did you decide you will go into higher education? Please mark one circle.**

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| It was natural for me to continue to higher education after secondary school. | <input type="radio"/> |
| In primary school.  | <input type="radio"/> |
| In the first two years of secondary school.                                   | <input type="radio"/> |
| In the last two years of secondary school.                                    | <input type="radio"/> |
| It was a last minute decision.  | <input type="radio"/> |

### D. About your choice of course

**13. Was this course your: (Please mark one circle.)**

First choice

☐

Second choice

☐

Third choice

☐

**13a. If your enrolled course was your second or third choice, could you please write down why you didn't enrol into your first choice course?**

**14. To what extent did the following people influence your choice of course? Please mark a circle for each of the provided people.**

Not at all      Mostly not      Mostly yes      Fully

Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boyfriend/girlfriend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brother/sister	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grandfather/grandmother	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Secondary school teacher(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional advisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**15. Why did you decide to enrol into this course specifically? Please mark a maximum of THREE reasons.**

Because my family wanted me to.	<input type="radio"/>
Because my friends enrolled into this course.	<input type="radio"/>
Because I think that completing this course will increase my employment chances.	<input type="radio"/>
Because I am interested in this course.	<input type="radio"/>
Because I think completing this course will give me high status in society.	<input type="radio"/>
Because I didn't know what else to study.	<input type="radio"/>
Because this course will prepare me for my future job.	<input type="radio"/>

**15a. Are there any other reasons why you enrolled into this particular course and which were not mentioned in the previous question? What are they?**

**16. When did you decide on this particular course? Please mark one circle.**

It was natural for me to continue to higher education after secondary school.	<input type="radio"/>
In primary school.	<input type="radio"/>
In the first two years of secondary school.	<input type="radio"/>
In the last two years of secondary school.	<input type="radio"/>
It was a last minute decision.	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Do you think this course is: (Please mark one circle.)**

More appropriate for women.	<input type="radio"/>
More appropriate for men.	<input type="radio"/>
Equally appropriate for both women and men.	<input type="radio"/>

The following few questions address different aspects of studying. Please answer the questions in as much detail as possible.

18a. What do you find important with regard to administrative services at your department? (e.g. the student office, information about exams, timetables etc.)

18b. What do you find important with regard to department resources? (e.g. library, access to books, computers, sport activities, labs etc. )

18c. What do you want to gain from this course? (e.g. new knowledge and skills, creative potential, use of computers etc.)

18d. What do you find important with regard to the work of your teachers? (e.g. correct student-teacher relationship, interesting lectures, fair assessment etc.)

18e. What do you find important with regard to the relationship with your colleagues? (e.g. cooperation with preparing exams, new friendships etc.)

18f. What do you expect from yourself with regard to the course? (e.g. attending lectures, good grades etc.)

18g. Is there anything in particular connected to your course that you think influences your student experience and was not covered in the previous questions? Please elaborate here.

19. Do you expect to enrol into the second year on time? Please mark one circle.

Yes No I don't know

☐ ☐ ☐

20a. What is your biggest worry about your studying so far?

20b. What makes you happiest about your studying so far?

21. How satisfied are you with your course so far? Please mark one circle.

Not at all satisfied Mostly dissatisfied Mostly satisfied Extremely satisfied

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

22. On the basis of your experiences so far, would you enrol into this course again? Please mark one circle.

Definitely no Probably no Probably yes Definitely yes

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

## F. General information

23. Could you please write in your date of birth and the first three letters of your name? (e.g. 2405zri).

### 24. Age

Less than 18 18 19 20 21 Over 21

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

### 25. Citizenship

Croatian Foreign Dual

☐ ☐ ☐

### 26. Gender

M F

27. Do you have any special needs?

Yes No

☐ ☐

If your answer to question 27 is yes, could you please state what special need is involved?

**28. Before enrolling into this course, where did you live for most of your life? Please mark one circle.**

In Zagreb	In a larger city that is not Zagreb	In a smaller town	In a village	Abroad
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**29. What type of home did you live in? Please mark one circle.**

In a house owned by my family	In a rented house	In a flat owned by my family	In a rented flat	In a children's home	Other
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**30. How big is this home? Please mark one circle.**

Up to 65 square metres	66-85 square metres	86-100 square metres	101 and more square metres
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**31. How big is your immediate family (parents, siblings)? Please mark one circle.**

2	3	4	5	More than 5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**32. Did the home you have lived in for most of your life so far have the following? You can mark more than one answer.**

Dishwasher	<input type="radio"/>
TV	<input type="radio"/>
Desktop	<input type="radio"/>
Laptop	<input type="radio"/>
Car	<input type="radio"/>
Ski equipment	<input type="radio"/>

**33. Did you have the following in the home you have lived in for most of your life so far? Please mark one circle for each of the options.**

	Yes	No
My own room	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An internet connection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A working table	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**34. Would you describe the home you have lived in for most of your life as having: (Please mark one circle for each given option.)**

Yes No

A lot of classical books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lot of artwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lot of records/tapes/cds with popular music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lot of records/tapes/cds with classical music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**35. Where do you live now? Please mark one circle.**

In my family home	<input type="radio"/>
In my own flat/house	<input type="radio"/>
With relatives	<input type="radio"/>
I rent	<input type="radio"/>
In student accommodation	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Please write where.	<input type="radio"/>

**36. How satisfied are you with your living conditions? Please mark one circle.**

Not satisfied at all      Mostly dissatisfied      Mostly satisfied      Extremely satisfied

☐      ☐      ☐      ☐

**37. What is your parents' educational level? Please mark one circle.**

**Father**

**Mother**

Incomplete primary schooling

☐

☐

Primary schooling

☐

☐

Three year vocational school

☐

☐

Four year vocational school

☐

☐

Grammar school

☐

☐

Professional higher education

☐

☐

University education

☐

☐

Masters or PhD

☐

☐

**38. Occupation of parents. Please mark one circle.**

**Father**

**Mother**

Heads and members of government bodies (legislative, executive and judiciary), state bodies, directors, managers (e.g. heads and officials of political parties, interest groups, directors of different organisations etc.)

☐

☐

Scientists and experts (e.g. graduated engineers, graduate computer experts, doctors, professors, teachers, judges, lawyers, economists, journalists etc.)

☐

☐

Engineers, technicians (e.g. chemical and physical engineers, traffic engineers, nurses, social workers, singers, sportspersons etc.)

☐

☐

Office and counter officials (e.g. secretaries, postmen etc.)

☐

☐

Trade and service jobs (e.g. stewardesses, conductors, chefs, waiters, hairdressers, policemen, firemen etc.)

☐

☐

Agricultural, forest workers and fishermen (e.g. cattle rearing, gardening etc.)

☐

☐

Craft occupations (e.g. miners, mechanics, butchers, tailors, carpenters etc.)

☐

☐

Machinery attendants, drivers (e.g. people who work with machines, bus and tram drivers, boat crews)

☐

☐

Other occupations (e.g. street cleaners, couriers, cleaners etc.)

☐

☐

Military personnel

☐

☐

Retired

☐

☐

Kept people (e.g. housewives etc.)

☐

☐

Unemployed

☐

☐

39. What is their employment status? Please mark one circle for each parent.	Father	Mother
Private entrepreneur (owner of a business) with employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private entrepreneur (owner of a business) without employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee in the state sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee in the private sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not active on the labour market (e.g. retired person, receivers of disability grant etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unemployed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. What is their work status? Please mark one circle for each parent.	Father	Mother
Full-time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Part-time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not active on the labour market (e.g. retired person, receivers of disability grant etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unemployed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. In kunas, how much is your family's average monthly income?

42. How do you estimate your family's income? Please mark one circle.	Very bad (significantly below the national average)	Bad (below the national average)	Average (around the national average)	Good (above the national average)	Very good (significantly above the national average)
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. How do you cover the costs of your study? You can mark more than one answer.	
My parents finance me	<input type="radio"/>
I receive a scholarship	<input type="radio"/>
I work	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Could you please write how?	<input type="radio"/>

44. In kunas, how much on average do you spend per month? (including rent etc.)?

45. How often do you talk to your parents about:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Daily political and/or social events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movies and TV programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>45a. What do you most often talk to your parents about?</b>

46. How often do you talk to your friends about:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Daily political and/or social events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movies and TV programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>46a. What do you most often talk to your friends about?</b>

47. How often in your free time do you:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Go to the cinema	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to the theatre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to pop concerts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to classical music concerts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to folk music concerts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to sport events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to exhibitions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. How often in your free time do you read:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Literary works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Daily newspapers (e.g. Jutarnji list, Vjesnik)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport newspapers (e.g. Sportske novosti)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fashion magazines (e.g. Glorija, Cosmopolitan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political weeklies (e.g. Globus, Nacional)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49. How often in your free time do you:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Go out with friends or partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go out to cafes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go out to clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listen to the radio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to creative workshops (e.g. photography, jewellery making)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do voluntary work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49a. What do you like doing most in your free time?

**50. What type of music do you like listening to? Please mark a maximum of THREE circles.**

- Croatian rock (e.g. Psihomodo pop, Hladno pivo, Majke) and/or hip-hop (e.g. Edo Maajka) ☐
- Traditional Croatian music (e.g. klape, tamburaši) ☐
- Croatian pop and/or dance (e.g. Magazin, Jacques Houdek) ☐
- Turbo folk ☐
- International rock, hip-hop and pop music ☐
- Jazz ☐
- Classical music ☐
- I don't like listening to music ☐
- Something else. What? ☐

**51. What type of books do you like reading? Please mark a maximum of THREE circles.**

- International and national classics ☐
- Contemporary international prose and poetry ☐
- Contemporary Croatian prose and poetry ☐
- Detective stories ☐
- Science fiction ☐
- Comics ☐
- Romantic novels ☐
- I don't like reading ☐
- Something else. What? ☐

**52. What type of films do you like watching? Please mark a maximum of THREE circles.**

- Comedies ☐
- Action films ☐
- Dramas ☐
- Historical and war movies ☐
- Musicals ☐
- Romance ☐
- Horror movies ☐
- Science fiction ☐
- Westerns ☐
- Documentaries ☐
- Something else. What? ☐

**53. Which of the following statements describes your religious beliefs best? Please mark one circle.**

- I am religious ☐
- I am an atheist ☐
- I don't care ☐
- I'm not sure ☐

If you think there is something important about your decision to continue to higher education after secondary schooling, your choice of course or something about your student experience that was not covered in this questionnaire, please use this space to write down any such comments.

**IMPORTANT!!!!!!**

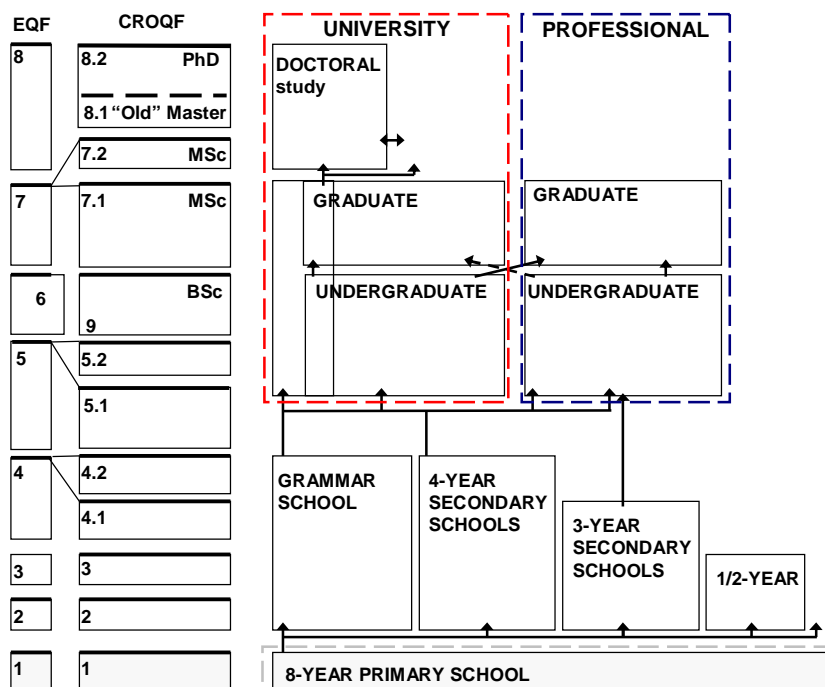
In order to understand student experiences better, I would like to have the opportunity to talk to you personally about what it's like to be a student for you. If you might be interested in talking to me about your experiences, could you please write down here a contact e-mail address or number. You will only be talking to me, at a time that suits you and of course, your answers will be confidential.

Thank you in advance!

**Thank you for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire!**

## APPENDIX 8: THE CROATIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Appendix 8. Diagram of the Croatian educational system (Adapter from: Dželalija, M. (2007). The Croatian qualifications framework, CARDS 2003).



There are currently seven public and no private universities in Croatia, 13 public polytechnics, 3 private polytechnics, 3 public schools for professional HE and 25 private schools for professional HE (MSES 2009); the largest (by number of faculties/departments and number of students) and oldest university (dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century) is the University of Zagreb.

Croatian HE is conducted through university and professional studies. *University* is defined as an institution that organises and implements studies in at least two scientific and/or art areas in a number of fields and interdisciplinary studies. Its main constituents are: faculties, art academies and departments. *Faculties* are HE institutions that, as university constituents, organise and carry out university studies and develop scientific research and professional work in one or more scientific and professional fields. They may also establish and carry out professional studies. *Academies of art* are HE institutions that, as university constituents, organise and carry out university artistic studies and scientific research in the arts. Art academies may also establish and carry out professional artistic studies. Finally, *University departments* are university constituents that participate in the implementation of study programmes and develop scientific, artistic and professional work in a single field of science or in an interdisciplinary area of science, as well as participate in the implementation of professional studies. To illustrate these terms, the Department of English and the Department of Sociology in Zagreb are both part of the Faculty of Philosophy, which is

part of the University of Zagreb. The Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Dramatic Art are also part of the University of Zagreb.

According to the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (2003), university study qualifies students for performing jobs in science and HE, the business community, the public sector and society in general. University study in Croatia includes three levels: undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate. The undergraduate level normally lasts for three to four years and students earn 180-240 ECTS credits; upon completion students are awarded an academic title of *baccalaureus* or *baccalaurea* with reference to a specialisation. Students can continue their studies at graduate university study or specialist professional graduate study or enter the labour market. Graduate education normally lasts for one to two years and students earn 60-120 ECTS credits. The total number of credits earned at undergraduate and graduate study is at least 300 ECTS credits. Upon completion of graduate study, students are awarded the academic title of Master of Science or Master of Arts in all studies apart from medicine, when they are awarded the academic title of Doctor. Students can continue their studies at postgraduate university study or enter the labour market. Finally, post-graduate university study lasts for three years. Upon completion, students are awarded the academic title of Doctor of Science or Doctor of Arts. Universities may also organise a postgraduate specialist study lasting one to two years and award a title of a specialist in a certain field.

Polytechnics and schools of professional HE are institutions that organise and implement only professional studies. Professional study offers students knowledge and skills that enables them to perform professional occupations, and trains them for direct entry to the labour market. Professional study includes two levels: professional study and specialist professional graduate study. Professional studies last two to three years and students earn 120-180 ECTS credits. Exceptionally, following the approval of the National Council for Higher Education, professional study may last up to four years and students can earn up to 240 ECTS credits. Upon completion of professional study with less than 180 ECTS credits, students are awarded a relevant professional title. Upon completion of professional study with 180 ECTS credits or more, students are awarded the professional title of professional *baccalaureus* or *baccalaurea* with reference to a specialisation. Students can continue their studies at graduate university study or specialist professional graduate study or enter the labour market. Specialist professional graduate study lasts one to two years and students earn 60-120 ECTS credits. Upon completion, students are awarded the title of a specialist of the respective profession. Students can continue their studies at graduate university study or enter the labour market. In all the above cases, the enrolment requirements for all levels of university and professional studies are determined by the HE institutions themselves.

## APPENDIX 9: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

### Appendix 9.1 Summary of findings I

Influences	Continuing to HE		Choosing a course		Progress/student experiences	
	SG	FG	SG	FG	SG	FG
Cultural capital: parents' contribution	* 'Naturalness': continuing family educational history * Parents' emotional support	* Change: breaking with family educational history * Parents' emotional support	* Examples of enrolling into the same course as a family member * Parents' emotional support	* Parents' emotional support	* Educational support for students with a parent who completed the same course of study * Parents' emotional support	* Parents' emotional support
Cultural capital: contribution of secondary school attended	* 'Naturalness' to continue to higher education with a grammar school background * Students with a vocational school background in this study tended to be first generation students		* Attended grammar schooling as the expected educational pathway more specifically for certain courses over others, e.g. the highest proportion of grammar school pupils is at MED, while the lowest at MGO		* Grammar schooling identified as contributing to successful progress: students tend to feel better prepared with regard to content and study skills * Institutions reinforce disparities in attended secondary schooling	
Cultural capital: embodied form	* Highbrow cultural practices and knowledge not mentioned by the interviewed students as having an influence on their educational achievements; however, students suggested that this may matter at courses in the humanities and social sciences. In the study, 'beaux art' participation and cultural goods were positively associated with second generation students.					
Social capital - adults		* FG: 'Acquired' contacts, e.g. teachers who encourage continuation to HE	* SG: 'Inherited' family contacts who contribute to more informed choices	* FG: 'Acquired' contacts, e.g. teachers who contribute to choices	* Supportive staff, 'the godfather' can contribute to successful progress.	
Social capital - colleagues					* Importance of exchanging materials with colleagues, studying together, signing each other into classes, 'virtual' meeting points, importance of 'fitting in' for positive experiences and progress.	
Economic capital	* Judging by the profile of the student body in terms of how they estimate their family's financial status, continuing to HE is less probable for those who would estimate their financial status as 'bad' or 'very bad'.		* Restricted course choices for students with financial difficulties (e.g. having to enrol into a shorter course). * Certain faculties more expensive than others, e.g. DES as expensive.		* Financial difficulties identified as negatively impacting progress for students living away from home. * Not fitting in on economic grounds was not prominent in the conducted interviews; however, two students suggested private HE institutions were spaces where students who were of lower economic status might feel excluded.	

## Appendix 9.2 Summary of findings II

Influences	Continuing to HE	Choosing a course	Progress/student experiences
Place	*Continuing to HE possibly a more likely option for students from poorer backgrounds who live in or near the university city in comparison to those who live away (rural-urban distinction).		*No significant differences were observed with regard to study progress based on type of living arrangement or satisfaction with one's living conditions. However, students suggested that living away from home is more difficult since it also involves domestic responsibilities. *Living in student accommodation was described as providing a richer social life in comparison to living with one's family or renting a flat. *A difference could be observed between students from Zagreb and those who have moved to Zagreb for study purposes. For the latter group, the student experience involves wide ranging personal changes.
Labour market	*Employment opportunities identified as contributing to the decision to continue to higher education.	*Employment opportunities identified as contributing to choice of course.	*Employment opportunities identified as motivation to complete the course. *Not having a clear image of employment opportunities following course completion identified as having a negative impact on course progress.
Gender	*Gender aspect with regard to reasons to study a particular course: male students more likely to choose the 'employment' option and female students the 'course interest' option. *Gender stereotypical constructions of courses and labour market opportunities were identified as influencing course choice.		*Gender biased marking affects assessment experiences. *Experiences of a female student affected by sexist remarks made by a lecturer. *Gender stereotypical construction of future job opportunities contributes to a student leaving her course.
Institutional factors	Admission process biased in favour of grammar school pupils.	The University of Zagreb's symbolic capital (prestige) influences students' choice to study there.  Social prestige of faculties such as MED act as a motivating factor for some students and de-motivating for others.  Institutional prestige related to quality contributes to choice of course.	*Students on courses with fewer students have a more personal academic experience than those at large faculties. *Friendly and supportive academic environments contribute to positive academic experiences, whereas 'hierarchical' to negative. *Teacher assumptions of prior knowledge have a negative impact on progress. *Understanding the practical applicability of course content contributes to positive study experiences. *Amount of content contributes to study experiences. *Timetabling and course organisation contribute to study experiences. *Oral exams were identified as privileging students with a grammar school background which influences progress. *Online resources were identified as contributing to study progress.
Personal characteristics			Personal decision not to study, prioritizing one's social life.

## REFERENCES

- Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (2003). Passed by the Croatian parliament in July 2003.
- Adkins, L. (2004a). Introduction: Feminism, Bourdieu and after. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives* (pp.3-19). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Adkins, L. (2004b). Reflexivity: Freedom or habit of gender?. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives* (pp.191-210). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Aldridge, S. & Rowley, J. (2001). Conducting a Withdrawal Survey. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(1), 55-63.
- Archer, L. (2003a). Social class and higher education. In L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.) *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion* (pp.5-20). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Archer, L. (2003b). The 'value' of higher education. In: L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.), *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion* (pp.120- 136). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Archer, L. & Leathwood, C. (2003). Identities, Inequalities and Higher Education. In: L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.), *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion* (pp.176-191), London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Archer, L. & Hutchings, M. (2000). Bettering yourself? Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working-class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21(4), 555-574.
- Archer, M. (1988). *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arnot, M., David, M. & Weiner, G. (1999). *Closing the Gender Gap: Postwar Education and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Babić, Z., Matković, T. & Šošić, V. (2006). Structural Changes in Tertiary Education and Impacts on the Labour Market. *Privredna kretanja i ekonomska politika*, 16(108), 28-65.
- Babić, Z. (2005). Participation Rates and Investment in Education in Croatia. *Economic Trends and Economic Policy*, (101), 28-53.
- Baker, S. & Brown, B. (2007). Images of excellence: constructions of institutional prestige and reflections in the university choice process. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(3), 377-391.
- Ball, S.J., Davies, J., David, M. & Reay, D. (2002). 'Classification' and 'Judgment': social class and the 'cognitive structures' of choice of Higher Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(1), 51-72.
- Ball, S.J. & Vincent, C. (1998). 'I heard it on the grapevine': 'hot knowledge' and school choice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(3), 377-400.

- Baron, S., Field, J. & Schuller, T. (2000). *Social Capital. Critical Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baudelot, C. (1994). Student Rhetoric in Exams. In: P. Bourdieu, J-C. Passeron, M. de Saint Martin. *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professorial Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beekhoven, S., De Jong, U. & Van Hout, H. (2004). The impact of first-year students' living situation on the integration process and study progress. *Educational Studies*, 30(3), 277-290.
- Bennett R. (2003). Determinants of Undergraduate Student Drop Out Rates in a University Business Studies Department. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(2), 123-141.
- Berlin Communiqué (2003). Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Berlin.
- Bernstein, B. (1977). Social Class, Language and Socialisation. In: J. Karabel & A.H. Halsey (Eds.) *Power and Ideology in Education*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Black, T.R. (2002). *Understanding Social Research*, London: Sage.
- Bologna Declaration (1999). Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, Bologna.
- Bologna process national report: Croatia (2009). Retrieved 15 May 2009, from: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>
- Boudon, R. (1974). *Education, Opportunity and Social Equality*. New York: Wiley.
- Bouillet, D. & Gvozdanović, A. (2008). (Un)successful studies: Personal Choice or Consequence of the University Education System in Croatia. *Sociology and Space*, 46(3-4), 241-246.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu et al. (1999). *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (1992). *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P., Chamboredon, J-C., Passeron, J-C. (1991). *The Craft of Sociology – Epistemological Preliminaries*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo academicus*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1987). What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32, 1-17.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In: A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, A. Stuart Wells (Eds.) (1997). *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The forms of Capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-58). New York: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J.C. (1979). *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relations to Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J.C. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. & de Saint-Martin, M. (1974). Scholastic excellence and the values of the educational system. In: J. Eggleston (Ed.) *Contemporary research in the sociology of education*, London: Methuen and Co.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In: R. Brown (1979). *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*. London: Tavistock.
- Bourdieu, P. (1967). Systems of Education and Systems of Thought. In: M.F.D. Young (Ed.) (1971). *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (pp.189-207), London: Collier Macmillan.
- Bowen, E., Price, T., Lloyd, S., Thomas, S. (2005). Improving the quantity and quality of attendance data to enhance student retention. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 29(4), 375-385.
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Boyle, R., Carter, J. & Clark, M. (2002). What Makes Them Succeed? Entry, progression and graduation in Computer Science. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(1), 3-18.
- Bradley, H. (1996). *Fractured identities – Changing Patterns of Inequality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Breen, R. (2005). Foundations of a neo-Weberian class analysis. In: E.-O.Wright (Ed.). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Brooks, R. (2007). Friends, peers and higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(6), 693-707.
- Brooks, R. (2003). Young People's Higher Education Choices: the role of family and friends. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), 283-297.
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Brown, P. (1996). Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: Some observations on recent trends in education, employment and the labour market. *Work, Employment and Society*, 9(1), 29-52.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Byrne, M. & Flood, B. (2005). A study of accounting students' motives, expectations and preparedness for higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 29(2), 111-124.
- Callender C. & Wilkinson, D. (2003). *2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey: Students' Income, Expenditure, and Debt in 2002/03 and Changes since 1998/99*. Department for Education and Skills: London.
- Cartney, P. & Rouse, A. (2006). The emotional impact of learning in small groups: highlighting the impact on student progression and retention. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(1), 79-91.
- Central Bureau of Statistics – Republic of Croatia (2001). Census 2001.
- Challis, D. (2005). Committing to quality learning through adaptive online assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(5), 519-527.
- Charlesworth, S. (2000). Bourdieu, social suffering and working-class life. In: B. Fowler (Ed.), *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Christie, H. (2007). Higher education and spatial (im)mobility: non-traditional students and living at home. *Environment and Planning*, 39, 2445-2463.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge Farmer.
- Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1), 95-120.
- Cooke, R., Barkham, M., Audin, K. & Bradley, M. (2004). How Social Class Differences Affect Students' Experience of University. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(4), 407-421.
- Coulangelon, P. & Lemel, Y. (2007). Is 'distinction' really outdated? Questioning the meaning of the omnivirization of musical taste in contemporary France. *Poetics*, 35, 93-111.
- Couldry, N. (2005). The Individual Point of View: Learning from Bourdieu's The Weight of the World. *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 5(3), 354-372.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*, London: Sage.

- Crozier, G., Reay, D., Clayton, J., Colliander, L. & Grinstead, J. (2008). Different strokes for different folks: diverse students in diverse institutions - experiences in higher education. *Research Papers in Education*, 23(2), 167-177.
- De Graaf, N.D. De Graaf, P.M. & Kraaykamp, G. (2000). Parental Cultural Capital and Educational Attainment in the Netherlands: A Refinement of the Cultural Capital Perspective, *Sociology of Education*, 73(2), 92-111.
- Denscombe, M. (2003). *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Desmarchelier, C. (1999). Altered Habitus of Mature Aged Students. In: M. Grenfell & M. Kelly (1998) (Eds.) In: M. Grenfell and M. Kelly (1999) (Eds.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture and Education Theory into Practice* (pp.281-291). New York: Peter Lang.
- Dillabough, J.-A. (2004). Class, Culture and the 'Predicaments of Masculine Domination': Encountering Pierre Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 489-506.
- Dika, S.L., & Sing, K. (2002). Applications of Social Capital in Educational Literature: A Critical Synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(1), 31-60.
- DiMaggio, P. (1982). Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students. *American Sociological Review*, 47(2), 189-201.
- Doolan, K. (2009a, May 7). *Darvinizam na Sveučilištu. H-alter*.
- Doolan, K. (2009b, March 25). *Siromašnima ulaz zabranjen! H-alter*.
- Doolan, K. & Matković, T. (2008, September 29). *Koga nema? H-alter*.
- Dolenec, D., Marušić, I. & Puzić, S. (2006). *Tuition fees in the higher education system: the relationship between paying fees and study success*. Zagreb: Institute for Social Research.
- Duru-Bellat, M. (2000). Social inequalities in the French education system: the joint effects of individual and contextual factors. *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(1), 32-40.
- Egerton, M. & Halsey, A.H.(1993). Trends by Social Class and Gender in Access to Higher Education in Britain. *Oxford Review of Education*, 19(2), 183-96.
- Eimers, M.T. & Pike, G.R. (1997). Minority and non-minority adjustment to college: differences and similarities, *Research in Higher Education*, 38(1), 77-97.
- Farnell, T. (2009). *Does free education ensure equal access to education?* Retrieved July 11, 2009, from: [http://h-alter.org/vijesti/hrvatska/osigurava-li-besplatno-obrazovanje-jednak pristup-obrazovanju](http://h-alter.org/vijesti/hrvatska/osigurava-li-besplatno-obrazovanje-jednak-pristup-obrazovanju)
- Farnell, B. (2000). Getting Out of the Habitus: An Alternative Model of Dynamically Embodied Social Action. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6(3), 397-418.

- Ferrera, M. (1996). The 'Southern Model' of Welfare in Social Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 6(1), 17-37.
- Field, J. (2003). *Social Capital*. London: Routledge.
- Finocchietti, G. (2004). Students and Universities in Italy in an Age of Reform. *European Journal of Education*, 39(4), 459-469.
- Flere, S. & Lavrič, M. (2005). Social inequity and educational expansion in Slovenia. *Educational Studies*, 31(4), 449-464.
- Fowler, B. (2009). The Recognition/Redistribution Debate and Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, Problems of Interpretation. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26(1), 144-156.
- Fowler, B. (Ed.) (2000). *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Francis, B. (2001). Beyond postmodernism: feminist agency in educational research. In: Francis, B. & Skelton, C. *Investigating gender – Contemporary perspectives in education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Galland, O. & Oberti, M. (2000). Higher education students in contemporary France. *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(1), 105-116.
- Ganzeboom, H.B. C., De Graaf, P.M. & Robert, P. (1990). Cultural Reproduction Theory on Socialist Ground: Intergenerational Transmission of Inequalities in Hungary. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 9, 79-104.
- Gartman, D. (1991). Culture as Class Symbolization or Mass Reification? A Critique of Bourdieu's Distinction. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 97(2), 421-447.
- Gayle, V., Berridge, D. & Davies, R. (2002). Young People's Entry into Higher Education: quantifying influential factors. *Oxford Review of Education*, 28(1), 5-20.
- Gebauer, G. & William, J.M. (2000). Habitus, Intentionality, and Social Rules: A Controversy between Searle and Bourdieu. *SubStance*, 29(3), 68-83.
- Gilchrist, R., Phillips, D. & Ross, A. (2003). Participation and potential participation in UK higher education. In: L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.), *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion* (pp.75-95). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Giroux, H. (1983). Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 53(3).
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.
- Goldthorpe, J. (2007). Cultural Capital: Some Critical Observations. *Sociologica* 2.
- Goldthorpe, J. (1996). Class analysis and the reorientation of class theory: the case of persisting differentials in educational attainment. *British Journal of Sociology*, 47(3), 481-505.

- Gorard, S., Rushforth, K. & Taylor, C. (2004). Is there a shortage of quantitative work in education research. *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(3), 371-395.
- Greene, J.C. & Caracelli, V.J. (2003). Making Paradigmatic Sense of Mixed Methods Practice. In: A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.) *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. London:Sage.
- Grenfell, M. & James, D. (2004). Change in the Field - Changing the Field: Bourdieu and the Methodological Practice of Educational Research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 507-523.
- Grenfell, M. & James, D. (Eds.) (1998). *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London: Falmer Press.
- Grix, J. (2004) *The Foundations of Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grusky, D. (2005). Foundations of a neo-Durkheimian class analysis. In: E.-O.Wright (Ed.). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Haimes, E. (2002). What can the social sciences contribute to the study of ethics? Theoretical, empirical and substantive considerations. *Bioethics*, 16(2), 89-113.
- Harvey, L. (1990). *Critical Social Research*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Hatcher, R. (1998). Class Differentiation in Education: Rational Choices?. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(1), 5-24.
- Heathfield, M. and Wakeford, N. (1993). *They always eat green apples: images of University and decisions at 16*. Lancaster: Unit for Innovation in Higher Education.
- Hodkinson, P. & Bloomer, M. (2001). Dropping out of further education: complex causes and simplistic policy assumptions. *Research Papers in Education*, 16(2), 117-140.
- Hodkinson, P. (1999). Use of Habitus, Capital and Field in Understanding Young People's Career Decision Making. In: M. Grenfell and M. Kelly (Eds.) *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture and Education Theory into Practice* (pp.259-269). New York: Peter Lang.
- Holdsworth, C. (2009). 'Going away to Uni': Mobility, modernity and independence of English higher education students. *Environment and Planning*, 41(8), 1849-1864.
- Holdsworth, C. (2006). 'Don't you think you're missing out, living at home?' Student experiences and residential transitions. *The Sociological Review*, 54(3), 495-519.
- Horvat, E.M., Weininger, E.B. & Lareau, A. (2003). From Social Ties to Social Capital: Class Differences in the Relations between Schools and Parent Networks. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 319-351.
- Hutchings, M. (2003). Financial Barriers to Participation. In L. Archer, M. Hutchings & A. Ross (Eds.) *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion* (pp.155-173). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Hutchings, M. & Archer, L. (2001). 'Higher than Einstein': constructions of going to university among working-class non-participants. *Research Papers in Education*, 16(1), 69-91.
- Ilisin, V. (2008). A sketch for the Sociological Portrait of Students in Zagreb: an Introduction to the Study of Croatian Students Today. *Sociology and Space*, 46(3-4), 221-240.
- James, R. (2002). Socioeconomic background and higher education participation: An analysis of school students' aspirations and expectations. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- James, D. (1998). Higher Education Field-Work: The Interdependence of Teaching, Research and Student Experience. In: M. Grenfell and D. James (Eds.) *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London: Falmer Press.
- Jamieson, L. (1998). *Intimacy. Personal Relationships in modern society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jensen, J.L. & Rodgers R. (2001). Cumulating the intellectual gold of case study research. *Public Administration Review*, 61(2), 236-246.
- Johnson, B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Johnson B. & Turner L.A. (2003). Data Collection Strategies in Mixed Methods Research. In: A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds). *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. London: Sage.
- Jokić, B. & Ristić-Dedić, Z (2007). *In the shadows: private tutoring in Croatian education*. Zagreb: Institute for Social Research.
- Johne, J. & Taylor, J. (1989). Undergraduate non-completion rates: differences between UK universities. *Higher Education*, 18, 209-225.
- Kalmijn, M. & Kraaykamp, G. (1996). Race, Cultural Capital and Schooling: An Analysis of Trends in the United States. *Sociology of Education*, 69(1), 22-34.
- Karabel, J. & Halsey, A.H. (Eds.) (1977). *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Karen, D. (2002). Changes in Access to Higher Education in the United States: 1980-1992. *Sociology of Education*, 75(3), 191-210.
- Kenway, J. & McLeod, J. (2004). Bourdieu's Reflexive Sociology and 'Spaces of Points of View': Whose Reflexivity, Which Perspective?. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 525-544.
- Kettley, N. (2007). The past, present and future of widening participation research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(3), 333-347.
- King, A. (2000). Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A 'Practical' Critique of the Habitus. *Sociological Theory*, 18(3), 417-433.

- Kingston, P.W. (2001). The Unfulfilled Promise of Cultural Capital Theory. *Sociology of Education*, 74, 88-99.
- Kladis, D. (2003). The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process. *Higher Education in Europe*, 28(3), 353-354.
- Krais, B. (2000). The Gender Relationship in Bourdieu's Sociology. *SubStance*, 29(3), 53-67.
- Laing, C., Robinson, A. & Johnston, V. (2005). Managing the transition into higher education: An on-line spiral induction programme. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 6(3), 243-255.
- Lareau, A. & Weininger, E.B. (2003). Cultural capital in educational research: A critical assessment. *Theory and Society*, 32(5-6), 567-606.
- Laughlo, J. (2000). Social Capital Trumping Class and Cultural Capital? Engagement with School among Immigrant Youth. In: S. Baron, J. Field & T. Schuller (Eds.), *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lawler, S. (2004). Rules of engagement: Habitus, power and resistance. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives*, (pp.110-128). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lazić, M. (1987). *U susret zatvorenom društvu*. Zagreb: Naprijed.
- Leathwood, C. & Read, B. (2009). Gender and the Changing Face of Higher Education: A Feminized Future?. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Leathwood, C. & O'Connell, P. (2003). 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new student' in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(6), 597-615.
- Leuven Communiqué (2009). Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Berlin.
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a Network Theory of Social Capital. *Connections*, 22(1), 28-51.
- London Communiqué (2007) Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Berlin.
- Longden B. (2002). Retention rates – renewed interest but whose interest is being served?. *Research Papers in Education*, 17(1), 3-29.
- Lovell, T. (2000). Thinking feminism with and against Bourdieu. In: B. Fowler (Ed.), *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lynch, K. & O'Riordan, C. (1998). Inequality in Higher Education: A Study of Class Barriers. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(4), 445-478.
- Mackie, S.E. (2001). Jumping the Hurdles – Undergraduate Student Withdrawal. *Innovation in Education and Teaching International*. 38(3), 265-276.

- Magdalenić, I., Baranović, B., Ilišin, V., Milak, Z., Radin, F., Rimac, I. & Župančić, M. (1991). *The social profile of students at Zagreb University towards the end of the 80's*. Zagreb: Institute for Social Research.
- Malenica, Z. (2006). Changes in social stratification. *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 2006.
- Martić, M. (1970). *The social structure of the student body at Zagreb University in the 1960's*. Zagreb: Institute for Social Research.
- Martinez, P. (2001). *Improving student retention and achievement: What do we know and what do we need to find out?* LSDA reports. London: Learning and Skills Development Agency.
- Mateju, P. & Strakova, J. (2005). The Role of the Family and the School in the Reproduction of Educational Inequalities in the Post-Communist Czech Republic. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(1), 17-40.
- May, T. (1996). *Situating Social Theory*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McDonough, P. (1996). *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- McLeod, J. (2005). Feminists re-reading Bourdieu: Old debates and new questions about gender habitus and gender change. *Theory and Research in Education*, 3(1), 11-30.
- McMillan, J. & Western, J.S. (2000). Measurement of the socio-economic status of Australian higher education students. *Higher Education*, 39(2), 223-248.
- McNay, L. (2004). Agency and experience: gender as a lived relation. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives*, (pp.191-210). Oxford: Blackwell.
- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16, 95-117.
- McRobbie, A. (2004). Notes on 'What Not To Wear' and post-feminist symbolic violence. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.). *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives* (pp.99-109). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Meir, A. (1999). Social Capital and School Achievement Among Adolescents. CDE, Working Paper 9918.
- Mertens, D.M. (2003). Mixed methods and the Politics of Human Research: the Transformative Emancipatory Perspective. In: A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.) *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. London: Sage.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. California: Sage.
- Moi, T. (1991). Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture. *New Literary History*, 22(4), 1017-1049.
- Moore, R. (2004). *Education and Society: issues and explanations in the sociology of education*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Mouzelis, N. (2007). Habitus and Reflexivity: Restructuring Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(6).
- Munn, P. (2000). Social Capital, Schools, and Exclusions. In: S. Baron, J. Field & T. Schuller (Eds.), *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives* (pp.1-38). Oxford: OUP.
- Nash, R. (2005). Cognitive habitus and collective intelligence: concepts for the explanation of inequality of educational opportunity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(1), 3-21.
- Nash, R. (2002). Numbers and Narratives: Further Reflections in the Sociology of Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(2), 397-412.
- New York Times (2008, September 20). Croatia: Police Raid Several Universities. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from:  
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9403E7DF1330F933A1575AC0A96EC8B63>
- Novak, J. (2008, December 23). *Romi i Romkinje u visokom obrazovanju*. H-Alter.
- OECD (2006). Review of higher education: Croatia. Retrieved March 15, 2008, from:  
[http://www.oecd.org/document/13/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_35585357\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,0.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/13/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_35585357_1_1_1_1,0.html)
- Outhwaite, W. (2007). Bourdieu and Postcommunist Class Formation. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(6).
- Pakulski, J. (2005). Foundations of a post-class analysis. In: E.-O.Wright (Ed.). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Polšek, D. (2004). Higher education in Croatia and requirements of the European Union. In: K. Ott (Ed.), *Croatian Accession to the European Union*. Zagreb: Institute of Public Finance, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Portes, A. (2000). The Two Meanings of Social Capital. *Sociological Forum*, 15(1), 1-12.
- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1-24.
- Potter, G. (2000). For Bourdieu, Against Alexander: Reality and Reduction. *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30(2), 229-246.
- Poupeau, F. (2000). Reasons for domination, Bourdieu versus Habermas. In: B. Fowler (Ed.), *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Puzić, S., Doolan, K. & Dolenec, D. (2006). The social dimension of the Bologna process and (in)equality of opportunity in higher education – experiences from Croatia. *Sociology and Space*, 2-3, 221-243.
- Quibria, M.G. (2003). The Puzzle of Social Capital. A Critical Review. *Asian Development Review*, 20(2).

- Quinn, J., Thomas, L., Slack, K., Casey, L., Thexton, W. & Noble, J. (2005). *From life disaster to lifelong learning: reframing working class 'drop out'*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Ream, R.K. (2003). Counterfeit Social Capital and Mexican-American Underachievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(3), 237-262.
- Reay, D., David, M.E. & Ball, S. (2005). *Degrees of Choice: social class, race and gender in higher education*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Reay, D. (2004a). Education and Cultural Capital: The Implications of Changing Trends in Education Policies. *Cultural Trends*, 13(2), 73-86.
- Reay, D. (2004b). Gendering Bourdieu's concepts of capitals? Emotional capital, women and social class. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.). *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives* (pp.57-74). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Reay, D., David, M.E. & Ball, S. (2001). 'Making a Difference? Institutional Habituses and Higher Education Choice. *Sociological Research Online*, 5(4).
- Reay, D. (1998). Cultural Reproduction: Mother's Involvement in Their Children's Primary Schooling. In: M. Grenfell & D. James, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, London: Falmer Press.
- Reay, D. (1995). 'They Employ Cleaners to Do That': Habitus in the Primary Classroom, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 16(3), 353-371.
- Reed-Donahay, D. (2005). *Locating Bourdieu*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rhodes, C. & Nevill, A. (2004). Academic and Social Integration in Higher Education: a survey of satisfaction and dissatisfaction within a first-year education studies cohort at a new university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(2), 179-193.
- Richards, L. (2006). *Handling qualitative data*. London: Sage.
- Robbins, D. (1998). The Need for an Epistemological 'Break'. In: M. Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London: Falmer Press.
- Robbins, D. (1993). The practical importance of Bourdieu's analyses of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 18(2), 151-163.
- Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science*. London: Sage.
- Schuller, T., Baron, S. & Field, J. (2000). Social Capital: A Review and Critique. In: S. Baron, J. Field & T. Schuller (Eds.), *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives* (pp.1-38). Oxford: OUP.
- Sekulić, D. & Šporer, Ž. (2002). Political Transformation and Elite Formation in Croatia. *European Sociological Review*, 18(1), 85-100.
- Silva, E.B., & Edwards, R. (2004). Operationalizing Bourdieu on Capitals: A Discussion on 'The Construction of the Object'. ESRC methods programme, Working Paper 7.

- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data*. London: Sage.
- Simonova, N. (2003). The Evolution of Educational Inequalities in the Czech Republic after 1989. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(4), 471- 485.
- Skeggs, B. (2004a). Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of class, gender and sexuality. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.). *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives*, (pp.19-34). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Skeggs, B. (2004b). Exchange, value and affect: Bourdieu and 'the self'. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.). *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives*, (pp.75-96). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smyth, J. & Hattam, R. (2001). 'Voiced' Research as a Sociology for Understanding 'Dropping Out' of School. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 22(3), 401-415.
- Sorensen, A.B. (2005). Foundations of a rent-based class analysis. In: E.-O.Wright (Ed.). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Spajić-Vrkaš, V. (2003). Visions, Provisions and Reality: political changes and education for democratic citizenship in Croatia. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(1), 33-51.
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. London:Sage.
- Staničić, M. & Marušić, S. (1996). *The needs of the Croatian labour market for certain specialists*. Institute for International Relations and the Institute for Economics.
- Stanton-Salazar, R.D & Dornbusch, S.M. (1995). Social Capital and the Reproduction of Inequality: Information Networks among Mexican-Origin High School Students. *Sociology of Education*, 68(2), 116-135.
- Stuart Wells, A. (1996). African-American Students' View of School Choice. In: A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown & A. Stuart Wells (Eds.) (1997). *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, A. (2007). Cultural Capital, Cultural Knowledge and Ability. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(6).
- Sullivan, A. (2001). Cultural capital and educational attainment. *Sociology*, 35, 893–912.
- Supek, R. (1969). *On Educational Policies at the University, Social Origin of Students and the Success in their Studies*. Zagreb: Institute for Social Research.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. Eds. (2003). *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. London: Sage.
- Thomas, L. (2006). Supporting Students to Succeed in Higher Education: Contrasting Staff and Student Views. In G. Jary and R. Jones (Eds.) *Perspectives and Practice in Widening Participation in the Social Sciences* (pp.116—34). Birmingham: Sociology, Anthropology, Politics (C-SAP). The Higher Education Academy Network.

- Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(4), 423-442.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tomić-Koludrović, I. (2008). The role of theory: Sociology's response to the Bologna educational reform in Croatia. Retrieved May 24, 2009, from: [www.ios.sinica.edu.tw/cna/download/5a\\_TomicKoludrovic\\_2.pdf](http://www.ios.sinica.edu.tw/cna/download/5a_TomicKoludrovic_2.pdf)
- Van den Berg, M.N. & Hofman, W.H.A. (2005). Student success in University Education: A Multi-Measurement Study of the Impact of Student and Faculty Factors on Study Progress. *Higher Education*, 50(3), 413-446.
- Van Rees, K., Vermunt, J. & Verboord, M. (1999). Cultural classifications under discussion: latent class analysis of highbrow and lowbrow reading. *Poetics*, 26(5-6), 349-365.
- Warde, A. (2002). Constructions of Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociology*, 36(4), 1003-1009.
- Weininger, E.B. (2005). Foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's class analysis. In: E.-O.Wright (Ed.). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Weininger, E.B. and Lareau, A. (2003). Translating Bourdieu into the American context: the question of social class and family-school relations. *Poetics*, 31, 375-402.
- Wiborg, A. (2004). Place, Nature and Migration: Students' Attachment to their Rural Home Places. *Sociologica Ruralis*, 44(4), 416-432.
- Willis, P. E. (1977). *Learning to labour: how working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.
- Witz, A. (2004). Anamnesis and amnesia in Bourdieu's work: The case for a feminist anamnesis. In: L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.). *Feminism After Bourdieu: International Perspectives* (pp.211-223). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Woolcock, M. & Narayan, D. (2000). Social Capital: Implications for Development, Theory, Research and Policy. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 15(2), 225-49.
- Wright, E.-O. (2005). *Approaches to class analysis*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Applications of case study research*. London: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Yorke, M. (1999). *Leaving Early: Undergraduate Non-completion in Higher Education*, London: Falmer Press.
- Yorke, M. (1998). Non-Completion of Full-Time and Sandwich Students in English Higher Education: Costs to the Public Purse, and Some Implications. *Higher Education*, 36(2), 181-194.