

# Playing with power

An ethnographic exploration of habitus formation in Swedish elite schools

Max Persson

Sociologiska Institutionen

Masteruppsats i sociologi, 30 hp  
VT 2016

Handledare: Stina Bergman Blix



Stockholms  
universitet

# Abstract

This study follows students from two Swedish elite upper secondary schools with different profiles when they participate in a parliamentary role-play game. The game lacks a teacher authority and is not a graded activity, putting the students in a position where they must negotiate what constitutes winning and losing. The game is used as an ethnographic site to investigate what it means to be a 'successful' elite school student and how it is embodied. The aim is to explore concrete processes of habitus formation, extending the knowledge regarding elite socialization in the Swedish case. The findings suggest that the game puts notions of what it means to be a 'successful' student to its head, giving rise to conflicts between students from the two differently profiled schools. The conflicts articulate differences between schools within the elite school category with regard to student formation. Further, the game singles out a few students and make them feel entitled to become leaders. The study shows that the intersection of students' school affiliation, gender and social class background is important in order to understand whether they feel entitled or not, as well to understand their more encompassing experiences in this elite school game.

Keywords: elite school, habitus, formation, gender, social class, socialization, role-play game, Sweden, elitism, egalitarianism

# Contents

Introduction.....	1
The problem and research questions.....	3
Previous research on elite socialization.....	5
Theoretical reflections.....	8
Habitus as tool .....	9
Methodological reflections .....	11
My ethnographic gaze.....	11
Participant observation and interviews.....	11
Data and interpretation .....	13
Ethics and access.....	14
The setting.....	15
The role-play game .....	15
The schools and the selected students .....	16
Analysis .....	17
Part I.....	17
Manufacturing corporeal entitlement.....	17
Embodied fit and unfit .....	20
Unfit as inferiority and social distinction .....	22
Part II .....	24
To be selected .....	24
The game within the game.....	27
Part III .....	31
Pull back / Hold forth.....	31
Struggles over one's place .....	36
Embodied winning and losing.....	41
Concluding discussion .....	44
References .....	48
Appendix.....	51
Interview guide.....	51

# Introduction

Merridew turned to Ralph.

‘Aren’t there any grown-ups?’

‘No.’

Merridew sat down on a trunk and looked around the circle.

‘Then we’ll have to look after ourselves.’

... [Ralph] lifted the conch. ‘Seems to me we ought to have a chief to decide things.’

‘A chief! A chief!’

‘I ought to be chief,’ said Jack [Merridew] with simple arrogance, ‘because I’m chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp.’

Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, p. 17-18

Despite rising inequalities during the last decades, the Swedish school system is often viewed as highly egalitarian. Compared to many other Western countries it is considered to have a high degree of equity as well as being democratic in terms of access. Towards that background, it may sound as a contradiction to speak about Swedish elite schooling (Börjesson *et al.* 2015). During the decades around the 1950s, the compulsory school system in Sweden experienced vast reforms as part of the Social Democratic party’s construction of a strong welfare state. The reforms addressed, among other things, the social cleavage in the school system and attempted to create a comprehensive educational system common to all children. The aims were manifold, however one of them was to create equal opportunity in education regardless of socioeconomic status and place of residence (Richardson 2004). Yet, since the 1990s this policy paradigm has largely been replaced by marketization policies driven by both Social Democratic and Right Wing governments stressing decentralization, school choice and the possibility for companies to own and make profit from publicly funded schools (Forsberg 2015). Following those policies, the segregation between schools in Sweden with regard to students’ parental social background as well as students’ academic achievements has widened (Böhlmark & Holmlund 2011; Östh *et al.* 2013).

Although the term ‘elite school’ is not very common in the public or scientific debate about education in Sweden, some sociologists and historians of education have recently argued that it is a meaningful category. The strong focus on egalitarianism in the educational debate has obscured that Sweden actually has, and historically has had, institutions for elite schooling

(Börjesson *et al.* 2015; Sandgren 2015; Göransson 2007; cf. Bihagen *et al.* 2013). Palme (2008) shows that the upper secondary school landscape (in Stockholm) is socially differentiated with regard to different educations' recruitment of students. He finds both a vertical divide between 'elite' and 'popular' educations, and a horizontal divide between educations that attracts students from families close to the cultural sector opposed to those attracting students from families close to the economic sector (see also Lidegran 2009; Forsberg 2015). In a recent article, Börjesson and colleagues (2015) discuss three criteria to empirically identify 'elite schools' in Sweden. First, the school is selective in meritocratic terms. This means that very high grades or other credentials from previous school levels are required to attend the school. Second, the school is socially selective which means that students with upper middle and upper class family backgrounds are overrepresented.<sup>1</sup> And third, the functional criteria, which means that the school channel students to further elite institutions at a higher level in the educational system or to elite occupational positions. The last criteria put, according to the authors, focus on the schools' role in socializing students "into the culture of the affluent classes" and "into a more general elite culture" (Börjesson *et al.* 2015: 5). However, when the authors statistically identify an "elite segment" of upper secondary schools in the Stockholm school landscape it is based on the first two criteria but not the third (Ibid.: 7-9).

Elite schooling in Sweden is an under-researched area in general (Sandgren 2015) and the three criteria above constitute a valuable contribution. Yet, it leaves out important dimensions in the quest for understanding Swedish elite schooling, such as what these schools *do* with their students, as well as how the students themselves experience the schooling process. Do, for example, these schools shape a specific type of student with certain dispositions? A rich body of international research stresses that the specific institutional conditions and culture of elite schooling tend to foster certain 'elite identities' (Khan 2012a) or 'elite consciousness' (Cookson & Persell 1985) in the students. A key example of such a study is Bourdieu's (1996b) *State Nobility*. In addition to being selective in both meritocratic and social terms, the French elite schools are sites for "consecration" and "intensive cultivation" that prepare a select group of students for entering the field of power. These students develop a certain self-confidence, certain ways of interacting with each other, and even specific ways of "moving, speaking, laughing", as Bourdieu (1996b: 83) writes. But the argument is also that the strong selectiveness

---

<sup>1</sup> There exists a well-known association between the socioeconomic status (SES) of students' family of origin and student's school achievements and attainment to higher education (Breen & Jonsson 2005). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that the school functions as a mechanism of social reproduction by advantaging students with strong inherited cultural capital .

of these schools, in itself, has strong socializing effects. Students develop a sense of self that is shaped by the fact that they are part of this select group, of this ‘elite’ in the word’s original meaning. This means that these schools tend to “consecrate” the students, i.e. produce “a separate, sacred group” (Ibid.: 73). With one of Bourdieu’s (1977) key concepts one could argue that elite schools tend to form a specific *habitus*. Although there are important differences between the Swedish vis-à-vis French contexts, there is a need for posing questions like these and thereby extend knowledge regarding what Swedish elite schools *do* with their students.

In this thesis, I will empirically zoom in on two upper secondary schools<sup>2</sup> in a metropolitan area of Sweden – Garden School and City School – that given the definition above, can be identified as ‘elite schools’. The aim of this thesis is to investigate concrete processes of habitus formation within these two schools, and thereby extend the knowledge regarding ‘elite socialization’ in Sweden. In this study I will ethnographically follow students from Garden and City School when they participate in a week-long, international role-play game. In total there are about 80 students from different European countries participating, but this study will focus on the participants from Garden and City School who have been selected by staff because they are seen as the best representatives of their respective school.

## **The problem and research questions**

The role-play game is a simulation of a parliament and the students are supposed to take the role of ‘delegate’, representing his or her country in international political negotiations. The game-idea is that the delegates work in small teams to formulate policy proposals on a political topic that they seek to pass through the parliament through lobbying, debates, and speeches. However, from a sociological perspective games are not just the game-relevant moves players make, but also social encounters (Goffman 1961). This also means that it is ‘persons’ with their previous experiences and motivation that play the game and alongside the rules, other “external attributes”, such as sex, age, and socioeconomic status potentially structures the interaction in the game (Goffman 1961: 29, 35-37; see also Goffman 1969; Fine 1983). I will conceptualize the students’ previous experiences and social attributes with the habitus concept which

---

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish school system consists of four levels: preschool, compulsory school, upper secondary school, and higher education. Upper secondary school, or ‘gymnasium’ in Swedish, is not compulsory, but a vast majority of a cohort start it when they are 16 years old and finishes at 19.

highlights the embodied previous experiences and dispositions the students enter the game with (see *Theoretical reflections*).

Above, the similarities between the schools have been stressed; however, there are also important differences between them. In short, City School is more meritocratically selective with a socially diverse body of students, while Garden School is more socially homogenous with a large share of students from economically affluent upper class families. In a sense, we can understand City School as a ‘meritocratic’ elite school, and Garden School as a ‘social’ elite school. These differences are also mirrored in the students who are selected for the game (see *The Setting*).

Within the field of sociology of education, it is often stressed that the teacher, as a representative of the school institution, socializes adolescents by differentiating and (e)valuating them and their achievements in relation to some criteria.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, our role-play game is an educational context characterized by the absence of such an arrangement. But just because the game lacks the school’s characteristic evaluation procedures does not mean that issues of valuation and differentiation vanishes. One of the most striking aspects of games in general is that they differentiate players vertically into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ within some set of rules (Martin 2003: 23) and the differentiation often includes an implicit value judgement (Huizinga 1950: 50). Our role-play game’s lack of teacher, criteria, and grading put the students in a position where they themselves must form such value judgements and negotiate what it means to win or lose.

In this thesis, I use the game as an ethnographic site to explore how the students from Garden School and City School negotiate their position in the game while embedded in the more encompassing context of elite schooling. I will particularly focus on how they negotiate and bodily experience valuation, differentiation and hierarchies. The role-play game will be treated as an *épreuve*, a test, where questions of valuation and differentiation are put to its head. In that sense it is a “heuristic tool” that lets us “document tensions between competing grammars of worth”, as Lamont (2012: 213) writes. By investigating how the students practically negotiate and experience what it means to be an un/successful student in the game, and which

---

<sup>3</sup> Examples from three major directions within the field (‘functionalist’, ‘conflict’, and ‘interactionist’) is found in Parsons’ (1959) “differential valuation”, Bourdieu’s (1996b) “professorial judgement”, and Rist’s use of labeling theory to investigate “the dynamics [within the school] ... by which some children come to see themselves as successful and act as though they were, and ... how others come to see themselves as failures and act accordingly” (2007: 80).

students are categorized as such, we can learn about habitus formation processes in these two schools. The following two sets of detailed research questions will guide the study:

1. What constitutes successful and unsuccessful ways of playing the role-play game from the students' point of view and how is it tacitly and explicitly negotiated and struggled over?
2. How do the students experience the embodied practice of playing the game? How is this experience mediated by the students' habitus? Are there differences between students' experiences in the game with regard to social class background, gender, and school affiliation?

## **Previous research on elite socialization**

In the following, I will review previous research on elite socialization. The studies that are discussed are chosen based on the criteria that they focus on concrete micro processes of student formation in elite schools. This criterion delimits the research discussed to encompass mostly ethnographic studies. First, I will look briefly at the meaning of the concept 'elite' in general terms.

The word 'elite' is etymologically related to the noun 'elect' referring to a person or group "elected or formally chosen". Often this also includes an implicit value judgement, meaning that the person or group is seen as "eminent", "preferred", or simply the "best" (Williams 1983: 112-113). While at first mostly used in a theological context, the word elite gained its contemporary meaning in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries denoting a socially distinguished group with high social status. After the world wars, word formations such as 'elitism' occurred embedded in a new social critique (Ibid.: 113-115). There are several classical takes on the sociological problem of elites, such as the "ruling class" (Marx & Engels 2001), "governing elite" (Pareto 1976), "power elite" (Mills 1959), and "field of power" (Bourdieu 1996b). There is not space here to review these concepts, but I will look closer at one definition of elites that has guided my understanding of the concept in this study. Scott defines elites as "those groups that hold or exercise domination within a society or within a particular area of social life" (2008: 32). He distinguishes between four ideal typical elites corresponding to four types of domination: coercive, inducing, commanding, and expert elites. Further, he stresses the importance of making an analytical distinction between 'elites' and 'social classes', or other social categorizations such as gender, race/ethnicity, etc. This distinction makes it possible to empirically investigate from, for example, which social classes elites are recruited or how the composition of an elite is gendered (Scott 2008: 32-33, 35).



In Khan's (2012b) review article he distinguishes between the study of particular elite groups and the resources they control, on the one hand, and the study of the institutions key in (re)producing elites, on the other. In van Zanten's overview of the latter research field she argues that elite schools through "formal and 'hidden' curricula" provide a "strong secondary socialization model" and thereby "produce specific educational subjects" (2010: 329-330). Cookson and Persell have stressed the importance of investigating the practices, attitudes, and consciousness that these schools shape in their students and that potentially prepare them to enter positions of power. They argue that too often there is a "scholarly lip service paid to socialization" but without actually showing "what happens in the 'black box' of the school itself" (Cookson & Persell 1985: 18, 20; see also Melldahl 2015: 190).

In two recent ethnographies, we find examples of this approach. In Khan's ethnography of an American elite boarding school the focus is on how an adolescent elite is *made up*. He does this by studying the students' embodiment of mundane, and not so mundane, practices ranging from pedagogical activities of the school to the rituals characterizing a seated meal. The point is not that the students cognitively internalize rules of conduct, but instead come to bodily learn "how to carry oneself *within the world*" (Khan 2011: 83-84). Khan also shows that this learning process not just has functional aims, but means that one can perform the practices with embodied ease which becomes a form of social distinction. To carry oneself with ease means that one's practices look "'natural' and effortless", however, to do so "requires hard, systematic work" and that is the "great trick of ease" (Ibid.: 112-113; see also Bourdieu 1996: 21). Gaztambide-Fernández ethnographically studies how elite status, as an identity, is constructed and internalized at an American boarding school ('Weston School'). Rather than treating identity as something one possesses, the focus is on "identification" as the "process through which social entities (individuals and groups) identify and/or are identified with various categories and labels" (Gaztambide-Fernandez 2009: 12). By conceptualizing 'the Westonian' as an elite status group he focuses on how the students construct symbolic boundaries regarding "who is and who is not [a Westonian]" as well as boundaries between "different kinds of Westonians" (Ibid.: 11). While Khan stresses the socialization of the body, Gaztambide-Fernández focus rather on how practical value categories are socialized.

Also relevant to my study is research that addresses what kinds of attitudes, character, and sense of self are developed through elite schooling. Several studies show that elite schooling tends to develop a strong competitive disposition in its students. Fine's ethnography of competitive high school debate is situated at two socially selective upper middle class schools in the US. He

argues that by engaging in competitive debating the students are prepared for a future career in elite occupations. Fine also makes an interesting argument that by using these kind of games and gaming activities in education “winning becomes the measure of success” instead of the “discovery [of] truth, solving the problem, or reaching consensus.” (Fine 2008: 247). In general, elite schooling tends to be characterized by a competitive culture. Cookson and Persell argue that the elite schools in the American context stem from a British tradition that sought to make young upper class men ready for ‘combat’. Historically, such elite schools attempted to make the students “tough, loyal to each other, and ready to take command without self-doubt” (Cookson & Persell 1985: 25; see also Sandgren 2015: 60-61). However, this disposition was highly gendered and elite schools for females, on the contrary, attempted to cultivate young elite females who “avoid[ed] open combat” (Cookson & Persell 1985: 25). In the contemporary context, these schools *teach* students to cooperate, however, the students tend to *learn* to compete. Both because the ‘hidden’ curriculum of the school enforces it and because the students bring this competitive attitude from their home environment (Ibid.: 20, 152). Bourdieu argues similarly that a certain competitive attitude is fostered in the French preparatory schools where the student’s whole life is turned into competition, not the least because the design of the education encourages students to compete with each other. This prepares students more for the “the game of ‘every man for himself’ than teamwork and cooperation” but also for leadership positions rather than artistic or intellectual work (Bourdieu 1996: 87-88). In that sense, elite schooling, by diverse means, inculcates “the ‘will to win’ which is the mark of the true leader” (Bourdieu 1978: 824).

These results from research on the American, British and French contexts are not directly transmittable to my case, most clearly because Garden School and City School are not preparatory boarding schools. However, some of the results seems to resemble findings from the Swedish context and the research on non-boarding elite schools. In one of the few recent ethnographic studies of Swedish elites, Holmqvist (2015) focuses on an affluent suburb of Stockholm, which has a long tradition of housing members of cultural, political and economic elites, although today mostly accommodates members of the Swedish business elite. One part of the study treats the suburb’s local upper secondary school that can be understood as an elite school. It is shown, among other things, that much of the school day is organized as cooperative ‘teamwork’, however, there is a competitive peer pressure to assume leading roles in the ‘team’. This is seen by the teachers as training the students to assume leadership positions in their future working life (Holmqvist 2015: 570-574). In Törnqvist’s (2015) ethnographic study of a

selective upper secondary school in Sweden, she argues that the school fosters a student ethos that combines egalitarianism with elitism. While the students at the school develop a critique of powerful political elites and this way of organizing a society, the pedagogical and social activities at the school prepare the students to become highly competitive in the struggle for attaining elite positions. Törnqvist also focuses on how everyday activities at the micro level have socializing effects. For example, she shows that the notion of “winning an argument” in the student led recurrent “lunch debates” is connected to social prestige in the local school culture, but also that it can be seen as part of learning to exercise influence and power, which is key to becoming part of any elite.

## **Theoretical reflections**

Up to this point, I have used the socialization concept to capture what elite schools do with their students. But this notion carries a somewhat problematic baggage. In an early treatment of the social function of education, Durkheim viewed it as the “methodical socialization” whereby an adult generation passed down “ideas, sentiments and practices” to a younger generation (Durkheim 1956: 51). Parsons (see e.g. 1959) picked up this perspective and strongly shaped the modern sociological thinking on socialization. The structural-functionalist account of socialization has been criticized for conceptualizing the social agents as “passive bearers” and not “active appropriators”. Instead of understanding socialization as a passive transfer, Willis argues that it must be treated as a much more uncertain process that is achieved in everyday struggles in concrete settings (Willis 1977: 171-179; see also Wrong 1961; Garfinkel 1967: 68). I will combine this perspective with the habitus concept as an alternative way of theorizing the socialization process as an ambivalent, active and concrete process that puts the social agent at the center.

For Bourdieu, ‘habitus’ represents sediments of past experiences, that over time build up to a system of long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind, incorporated through the agent’s constant interaction with the world. Habitus is viewed as the tacit corporeal know-how that social agents acquire and engage in the encounter with the social world and that structures the orientation to, the perception of, and the action in, that world. Since habitus is shaped through concrete situations on a specific trajectory in social space, it draws a bridge between ‘objective’ structures and ‘subjective’ experience (Bourdieu 1984: 170, 172, 466). Bourdieu (1984: 101-102) uses the term “class habitus” to designate that the probability of similarity in habitus is larger if we live under similar social and economic conditions (i.e. share similar positions and

trajectories in social space). Given that the social space also has a specific gender order where men tend to have dominating positions and women occupy dominated positions, dispositions of the habitus is also gendered (Bourdieu 2001; Skeggs 2004).

Although sometimes mistakenly seen as denoting an automatic form of action (Camic 1986), habitus should rather be understood as a way of conceptualizing the social agent as an “competent” actor (Wacquant 2004: 16, 59, 60, 98, 117; see also Dewey 2012: 10-37; Crossley 2013). This is stressed by Swidler when she writes that in order to successfully “adopt a line of conduct” one must on the one hand be ‘tooled’ for the task as well as know “the kind of world in which one is trying to act” (Swidler 1986: 275). This touches upon the need for a practical literacy; an acquired ability to read social situations (Swidler 1986; see Bourdieu 2000: 176; Martin 2011: 197, 207, 244-245). The concept “ontological complicity” suggest a relation between an agent’s habitus and environing social context which means that an actor can be in “perfect mutual fit” but also in “radical disjunction” with the social field and the situation he or she tries to act in (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 128, 130). At the level of experience this generates such feelings as ease and unease, that were covered in the section on previous research.

We can see that inherent to the habitus concept is an ambition to connect macro structures such as class and gender, and the individual experiences, representations, and behavior at the micro level. Anderson has argued that the Bourdieusian perspective tend to do this connection in a “top-down” manner and that it cancels out the autonomy of the “situational, microsociological level of analysis” (2002: 1534; see also Skeggs 2004: 29-30). In order to avoid this, I will explicitly focus on the situational linking between micro processes and macro structures (Collins 2004; Kemper 2011). While Anderson’s critique on the one hand is theoretical, it is on the other a call for another methodological orientation, namely ethnography. Rather than assuming a top-down link from macro to micro, I will ethnographically investigate “how structures become sources of meaning and determinants of behaviour in the cultural milieu *at its own level*”, to put it with Willis’ (1977: 171) words.

## **Habitus as tool**

The aim of this thesis is to investigate concrete processes of habitus formation. In several accounts, habitus is stressed as if it were a singular ‘thing’ similar to a role or identity such as Reay’s “becoming a habitus” (2004: 432) or Wacquant’s focus on the formation of “a specific habitus” (2014: 6). Contrary to this, I will use habitus as a theoretical tool. Koselleck (2004)

makes a useful epistemological distinction between concepts that are used by agents in the social context and the “formal categories” that researchers use as tools to investigate that context. From the formal category we cannot deduce any context specific experience or meaning, but it is a frame that helps to encircle the phenomena we are interested in. Based on a close reading of Bourdieu’s works, I will argue that ‘habitus’ makes us attentive to three forms of experiences and dispositions.

The first form is *hexis*, which emphasizes the bodily experience and dispositions of agents. This makes us attentive to the micro aspects of embodiment and bodily performances, such as “ways of walking, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements, a tone of voice, and a style of speech” (Bourdieu 1977: 87). These ways of carrying oneself, are not just functional, but charged with meaning that can be decoded by other social agents. Drawing on Butler, we can think of how one carries oneself as a performative “corporeal style” (1990: 139).

The second form is the *emotive-cognitive* that put focus on the socially formed cognitive and emotional categories that social agents apply to make sense of situations they encounter in their everyday world. *Distinction* is a vivid example of an empirical investigation of taste as such a category. Here, taste (likes and dis-likes) is understood in a very broad sense as “an acquired disposition to ‘differentiate’ and ‘appreciate’” (Bourdieu 1984: 466). This put focus on the principles that organize social agent’s evaluations and valuations of objects, practices and other people.

While the two forms above are stressed in the secondary literature on habitus, I also want to highlight a less common third form (see Aarseth 2016; Swartz 2002). This aspect makes us attentive to the agent’s subjective experience of being socially positioned; the agent’s *relational sense of self*. Bourdieu often uses the metaphor “sense of one’s place” which is the agent’s subjective feeling of one’s social position in relation to others.

Each agent has a practical, bodily knowledge of her present and potential position in the social space, a ‘sense of one’s place’ as Goffman puts it, converted into a *sense of placement* which governs her experience of the place occupied, defined absolutely and above all relationally as a rank, and the way to behave in order to keep it (‘pulling rank’) and to keep within it (‘knowing one’s place’, etc.) (Bourdieu 2000: 184)

This sense of place is experienced by actors in their “struggles of everyday life” and reveals itself to an observer through displayed “emotion” and “unconscious behaviour” at the micro level (Bourdieu picks up the metaphor from Goffman 1951; cf. Collins 2004: 118).

## **Methodological reflections**

According to the handbook literature, doing ethnography means to spend a long period of time immersed in the research subjects' day-to-day life, trying to understand their shared practices, values and beliefs (Creswell 2013). However, my actual research process was quite different. I have focused on 'an event' that is limited in time and breaks with the students ordinary, routinized school work. In the following, I will outline how I methodologically approached this problem, as well as show how I have collected and interpreted data, and how I have handled issues of access and ethics. But before that I will account for how I approached the field.

### **My ethnographic gaze**

One of my inspirations in the development of an ethnographic gaze stems from Geertz's (1973) writings on thin and thick description. While thin description is an account of what is going on 'in itself', detached from the cultural context, thick description means including that meaningful context in the description and account for how it enters into the ongoing itself and renders it meaning. While this approach is inspiring, it also has its problems. A critique, that takes the theory of habitus into account, may be that the cultural ability to recognize, and thereby experience a phenomenon within its context, is dependent on one's habitus too, not just the relation between act and cultural context. In Geertz' hermeneutic approach, the production of ethnographic knowledge tends to become entirely dependent on the ethnographer's ability to interpret action and context. While ethnographic knowledge always is dependent on the ethnographer, I have in this study endeavored to capture the social agents' (the students) first-person experience. This means that we seek the social agents' thick form of experience of situations, actions, objects, etc., and how it is dependent on their deep-seated previous experiences (habitus). This does not mean that the first-person experience should be taken as viable sociological explanations in itself, rather it should be treated as data. The interpreter should then analyze variation and patterns in experience by relating them to social agents' positions (Martin 2011). This basic view has permeated all steps of the collection and interpretation of data in this study.

### **Participant observation and interviews**

Given that habitus put focus on pre-reflexive dispositions researchers are faced with the problem of how to study it empirically. We may think of habitus as made up of the accumulated 'surplus' that results from the encounter between agent and world. Therefore, I would argue,

the key to studying habitus formation goes via the social agent's experiences. But how can such experience be captured? Is it viable to rely on what social agents *say* in interview situations? Or do we have to observe what people *do* in concrete situations? (see debate in *Sociological Methods & Research* vol. 43 no. 2, esp. Jerolmack & Khan 2014; Vaisey 2014). Below I will elaborate on how I have used and combined observations and interviews.

Looking at the concrete data collection, I have carried out participant observation during two role-play game sessions held on five days during the autumn of 2014 and the spring of 2015. One of these sessions was held in Sweden and the other one abroad in a northern European country. In total I have followed twenty students from Garden School and City School, ten Swedish students in each session. In addition to the game activities, I have also participated in preparatory meetings, travelled with students to the sessions, and spent time with them on activities adjacent to the event such as dinners, pub nights, shopping trips, guided tours, etc. In total, I have spent roughly 100 hours hanging out, observing, and talking to participants. This has been documented in field notes.<sup>4</sup>

Doing brief fieldwork sessions comes with both advantages and disadvantages. Barth, for example, did fieldwork during a weekend on a winter herring fishery ship off the Norwegian coast. An advantage he points out was that “the social system is small and clearly separable, the activity is highly stereotyped, and each person occupies a single status of overwhelmingly predominant relevance to the interaction that takes place on board” (Barth 1969: 6). At the same time, we cannot know if the interaction appears ‘stereotype’ to the observer because of the short time spent in field. Ship life may have grown more multidimensional if Barth had spent more time at sea. Fangen (2005: 116) stresses that the positive side of shorter fieldwork is that the researcher can focus on just a few situations and understand them in more detail, but she also emphasizes that the approach requires the researcher to take other measures to secure the validity of the observations and interpretations. In order to increase the validity of my observations, I decided to conduct in-depth interviews (Ryen 2004) with the participating students afterwards in close proximity to the sessions. I have interviewed all participants from Garden and City School who volunteered. In total I have carried out sixteen student interviews. However, the number of unique students interviewed amounts to thirteen since there were three

---

<sup>4</sup> Between September 2014 and June 2015 I was employed as a research assistant within the project *Globalization and the Swedish upper secondary school* (Swedish Research Council) led by associate professor Mikael Palme at Sociology of Education and Culture (SEC), Uppsala University. I have permission to use the collected data in this project.

students who participated in both role-play sessions and therefore were interviewed twice. A weakness in the data is that two students who had key roles in the game (Albert and Jessica) did not find time to participate in the interviews. However, I performed informal interviews with them in the field during the role-play week and to some extent can this, together with observation data, be used to capture their experience. Although, as will be evident in the third part of the analysis, Jessica's actions are noticed and discussed by other students. It should be noted that given the lack of interview data on Jessica's own point of view, what is in focus in this part of the analysis is rather the other students' point of views on Jessica and the interaction she is engaged. Additionally, I have interviewed four members of the teaching staffs at Garden School and City School who were involved in the role-play project. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, but most often just over one hour. All interviews were transcribed in detail, including pauses, tone of voice, etc.

While observations can capture first-person experience in concrete situations, interviews tend to capture retrospective accounts or propositions about experience (Martin 2011). However, by using observation notes from concrete situations as a tool in the interviews, I will argue that interviews can capture an important dimension. The interviews took the form of a talk about how the student experienced the role-play week. Most often we talked about what happened from the point when the student got the announcement that he/she was selected for the role-play game and how it was experienced to the preparations before the event and how the different parts of the week were experienced. The interviews were open-ended and I only used the chronology of the week to get some basic structure for the interview in order to increase comparability between interviews (see Appendix). In preparation for the interviews I had also identified situations from my field notes where the interviewee took part and these notes were brought up during the interview. This was both a way of keeping the interview focused on concrete, and not abstract or potential situations, as well as a way of validating my observations and interpretations by letting the student take the observer role and comment on the situation from his/her perspective. Additionally, I had some themes that I covered in all interviews such as the students' experiences from current and previous schooling, leisure activities, family situation and parental social background (occupation and education).

## **Data and interpretation**

In the following I will expand on the focus of the observations and interviews, as well as how I have interpreted the data. The observations during the first role-play game were unstructured



and functioned as a pre-study. Through the initial observations I inductively identified a number of themes that I further investigated in the second session, so even though the presented excerpts in the analysis to a large extent come from the second session, the analysis is based on both. Before the second session I had settled on the habitus concept as my theoretical tool which informed both the design of the observation guide and the interpretation and coding of data (Willis & Trondman 2000). As was outlined above, the habitus concept makes us attentive to three forms of experience and dispositions (bodily, emotive-cognitive, and a relational sense of self) and these were used as themes in the collection and interpretation of data. It is important to note that these dimensions are analytical distinctions but in reality they are intertwined.

The first theme made me attentive to how the students experienced the embodied practice of playing. This means that I focused on how they carried themselves in a broad sense; how they moved, sat, their way of speaking, tone of voice, facial expressions, etc. and whether they expressed ease or unease. An important part of this was to focus on how students physically and aurally appropriated space in the role-play game's meetings. The second theme made me attentive to what is at stake for the students in the game and the cognitive categories they apply when they make sense of practices and other players in the game. Particularly I focused on what it means and feels to be 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' for the students. How are these categories made up, and how are the categories' boundaries established, maintained, and challenged? The third theme made me attentive to hierarchies in the game and how one's place in them give rise to a relational sense of self. This brings together the focus on embodied play and categories of evaluation and puts focus on how processes of differentiation give rise to a sense of self.

My interpretation strategy was then to analyze variation in experience between students within these three themes. Here school affiliation, gender and social class background played a key role. Do the experiences vary between students from the different schools, between students of different social background, as well as between male and female students?

### **Ethics and access**

The question of ethics is important, especially when studying groups like youths as in my study where the students are between 17-19 years old. Both in interviews and observations I obtained the participant's informed consent. This means that the participants in the research have been informed about the research and the potential consequences of participating, and that they were able to decide if they wanted to participate. All participants, as well as the schools and the role-

play game have also been anonymized for ethical reasons (Swedish Research Council and Centre for research ethics and bioethics at Uppsala University).

It is also important to address the issues of access since it strongly affects the kinds of data one can collect and its quality. One dimension of this issue is to get access to the site as such, while the other one is a more complex and involves constant negotiation of one's membership and place in the social group one wants to study (Gaztambide-Fernández & Howard 2012; Bergman Blix & Wettergren 2015). To gain formal access to the role-play game was unproblematic. I got permission to follow the Swedish students from the students themselves, the chairman of the organization that is responsible for the role-play game, as well as from staff in charge at Garden School and City School. However, the more constant negotiation of access to the student group was sometimes more problematic. At some points I experienced a sense of not being accepted, especially in relation to the male students at Garden School. To some extent this circumscribed my ability to gain insider experience from them and their group, however, my outsider position in relation to them made me, to some extent, an insider among those students (particularly from City School) who similarly experienced feelings of not belonging. The awareness of this has made me careful not to let it bias my interpretations in the analysis.

## **The setting**

### **The role-play game**

Recall, the role-play game is a simulation of a parliament and the students are supposed to play the role of delegate representing his or her country in international political negotiations. In order to increase authenticity, the role-play game is held in authentic parliamentarian buildings and the students are obliged to dress in formal attire like the real high-level leaders. According to the schools, the game is part of the social science education and the aim is to teach students about democratic and political processes through actual participation. However, in addition to that, the game is also framed as a leadership conference and the schools view it as a training ground for 'young leaders' in Europe where they can develop and practice leadership skills as well as enlarge their social network. The role-play week includes, in addition to the role-play game itself, activities such as cultural events, guided tours, lectures by politicians and team-building.

The delegates formulate a policy proposal with the goal to pass it in the parliament through a democratic voting procedure. The participants must win a majority of delegates to vote in favor

of their proposal through lobbying, debates, and speeches. Each participant is part of two groups. On the one hand a team of all the participants from the same country (delegation), and on the other hand, a mixed team of about 10 students from each participating country working on the same political topic (committee).

During the first days of the game the students formulate a resolution (a policy proposal) in the committee on a political topic. The topics can be climate change, demographical crisis, international conflicts etc. Much effort is put into formulating a resolution that will pass in the parliament and that is hard to criticize by other participants, meaning that they try not to be too controversial, striving to achieve logical coherence, as well as a clear language. When the resolutions are formulated, the role-play game enters the next phase. First, the country delegation meetings with participants from the same country discussing each resolution. The purpose of the meeting is to let the participants go through all of the resolutions to learn about them and to be able to prepare arguments against and in favor that can be raised later in the discussions. This is both an opportunity to prepare criticisms of resolutions and to learn about other delegates' potential criticism of one's own resolution and plan responses. After that follows the lobbying where the students are supposed to, under more casual conditions, seek support from other delegates for amendments of resolutions. Every delegate can sign amendments and the delegate with the most signatures is allowed to make a speech in the parliament. During the last days all the delegates meet in the parliament to debate and vote on resolutions. During the parliament session, the committee has chosen delegates who defend their resolution through speeches, and delegates of opposing committees are allowed to make speeches against the resolution. Finally, the delegates vote whether the resolution should pass or not.

### **The schools and the selected students**

Above, I stressed that there are both similarities and differences between Garden School (GS) and City School (CS). While both schools are socially and meritocratically selective, there are also important differences between them. At City School the admission criteria (grades) are slightly higher and the student body is more diverse in terms of class background (income and education as indicators). Garden School attracts, to a larger degree, students from strong

economic fractions of the upper classes.<sup>5</sup> A similar pattern emerges when we look at the parent's occupational status among the students who have been interviewed for this study. Among the interviewees, there is a predominance (7) of students with parents in typical upper class occupations such as owner or CEO in large private companies, senior management in large bank, and senior state official such as a diplomat. On the other side of this equation, some students (4) have parents in more typical middle class occupations such as upper secondary school teachers, lower state officials, and small business owners. Further, two students have parents in working class occupations.

These differences are also mirrored in the students' everyday understanding of the relation between the schools. While Garden School is understood as the "snob-" or "brat-school" (stekarskolan) in the students' everyday vocabulary, City School is seen as the more socially "mixed" or "diverse" "swot-school" (pluggskolan).

# Analysis

## Part I

In the following part we will look closer at the students' bodily experiences of entering the role-play game. First, I argue that the role-play game intends to make the students feel entitled to become leaders and that this sense of entitlement is a profoundly corporeal experience. Secondly, I show that not all of the participating students feel entitled. There is a variation in corporeal experience and it seems to vary with class habitus. In order to investigate this closer, we examine the students' relation to the formal attire, a piece of garment that the students are obliged to wear during the role-play week.

### Manufacturing corporeal entitlement

I am standing in a crowd of excited adolescents dressed in dark formal attire in the entrance hall of an old and exclusive official building. The country delegations are called up one by one and

---

<sup>5</sup> In 2008, about 60 percent of the students' parents at GS had very high incomes compared to about 40 percent at CS. At GS about 80 percent of the parents had 5 years of higher education or postgraduate education while at CS it was about 65 percent. Thanks to Håkan Forsberg at SEC, Uppsala University, for this data based on Statistics Sweden's (SCB) registers.

allowed to enter the assembly hall where the opening ceremony of the role-play game is to take place. There is a tense murmur in the hall and collective attention is directed towards the next call: “Sweden!” Now the seriousness rises and the Swedish students, including me, gather and enter in a worthy silence, the wooden gates of the assembly hall. Well inside, we find ourselves standing on the last row of the tiered red velvet seating in a grand Roman theatre-shaped hall. In front, just below us, elevated from the wooden floor, there is a podium in dark wood with details decorated in gold. The background features a row of eight white columns of Corinthian style. When we have taken our seats in our delegation there is a concert for piano and cello. After that follows several speeches, including one of the host country’s foreign minister and by the dozen or so students that have been elected to be the head of their delegation.

The introduction above is an excerpt from my field notes that documents the students first encounter with the role-play game. The exclusivity of the venue, the ambience of the hall, the classical concert, and the fact that these students did not just listen to the foreign minister but that some also made their own speeches and was listened to by the minister – all sets the tone for the role-play week and is meant to be highly charged with meaning for the students. According to the teachers at Garden School and City School, the role-play game is a pedagogical device for social science education where students should learn a democratic attitude and how political cooperation is done. According to Henrik, the teacher of City School, the role-play game is a form of “democratic training” that can “tear down prejudices” by letting students from different countries meet and cooperate. In that sense, the project taps into a key educational goal for all upper secondary education in Sweden which states that education at this level should teach fundamental democratic values as well as essential knowledge and skills for students to become active democratic citizens.

The opening ceremony did not signal a general preparation of the students for the role of democratic citizen. At the opening ceremony, as well as during the role-play week, the organizers repeatedly frame the project as a leadership conference for adolescents where students can acquire leadership skills and meet other ‘young leaders’ in Europe. In Hans’, the teacher at Garden School, speech during the opening ceremony he says to the audience of students that: “You participants in this hall are most likely the next generation of leaders in the world! You are young leaders!” (Field notes). The role-play is not a preparation for becoming an active voter in a democracy, rather it represents a preparation for becoming a leader in a democracy by getting a taste for that world. We can recall Scott’s (2008) definition of elites as groups that exercise domination within a particular area of the society. Then we can understand

the role-play game, deployed in the context of elite schooling, not just as general ‘democratic training’ but also as a simulation of the “commanding elite”, i.e. those persons or groups that “legitimately occupy the top administrative positions in institutional hierarchies of management and control” (Scott 2008: 33). The role-play game teaches the students, with Hans’ words, “the political game” and the “craft of politics” that politicians, but also ‘leaders’ in a more encompassing sense, must be skilled at.

One interpretation of the opening ceremony could be that it stimulates the students’ ‘game fantasy’ by creating authenticity which in turn makes it easier to take the role-play game seriously. However, the students themselves makes another ‘interpretation’. Let us look closer at this. The simulation of the ‘commanding elite’ is not just circumscribed to isolated talk about ‘young leaders’. The students should really *be* ‘leaders’ with all of their body during this week. In that sense, the role-play is a very corporeal project that aims at producing the embodied experience of being a leader. The students should, for example, enact a terminology inherent to those groups and institutions that exercise legitimate power (e.g. they are encouraged to use words like authorizes, recommends, condemns, urges, solemnly affirms, requests). This is also apparent in the fact that the role-play game is held in authentic parliamentary milieus and that the students are obliged to dress as real political leaders in formal attire. When Isabel accounts for the opening ceremony in an interview, she says that when one is dressed in that attire and steps into those halls “one talked not with one’s friend anymore, but with another delegate”. In the following quote she describes the architectural qualities of the assembly hall where the opening ceremony took place and she attaches a specific feeling to it and what it means to her:

There were a lot of chairs circulating around a podium, there were columns, like Roman columns in the background. And the light, there were dark wood panels, details of gold. Grand. It was very nice and serious. You felt important when you were there, you can say. (Isabel, GS)

Several students experience that the ambience of the built environment made them feel important and that they were taken seriously. Peter describe the milieu as “grand and magnificent” and he pays attention to such details as the fact that they had their own table with the characteristic table-top mic in the parliament hall. The built environment has a certain ambience that colors the students’ sense of self. Similar experiences are generated when students wear the formal attire. During the role-play game males are obliged to wear a dark suit with a tie while females should wear a dark jacket and trousers or skirt. Mia explains that she felt a sense of pride when she wore this attire. Other students, like Karl, say that the suit and his briefcase full of important papers made himself feel more “adult” and like he was carrying out

an important “job”. Isabel felt, similarly, “professional”. And Marcus experienced the shift from his everyday cloths to the suit as an enhancement of his “self-confidence” and his “authority”.

So how can we understand this? One interpretation, as I outlined above, would be that the authenticity aids the engrossment in the game. However, the formal attire and the ambience of the locations also seems to do something else. It seems to produce a corporeal sense of entitlement; a sense that we who have been selected to participate in this event are inherently important and deserve to be, and are, taken seriously. To feel that kind of entitlement seems to be a key characteristic in the formation of leaders, and to create such a sense of entitlement has also shown to be key to elite schooling (Gaztambide-Fernández *et al.* 2013). So, on the side of the pedagogic purposes of democratic training, the role-play game also seems to produce entitled adolescents. Yet, when we examine the students’ experiences more in-depth, we see variation in corporeal experience of being there; in those halls, in those clothes. The sense of entitlement is not everyone’s experience. It seems also to be *class related*.

### **Embodied fit and unfit**

In the following section we will zoom in on the students’ experiences of wearing the formal attire. While it can seem as an unimportant detail, these garments actually play a key role in the students’ experiences from the role-play week. The formal attire – dark suit with tie or dark jacket with skirt or trousers – is a strong symbol for political and corporate leaders and strong cultural values are attached to it (Nazli & Kesken 2014). Additionally, in a longer historical perspective the suit has a tradition of expressing masculine upper class and elite membership, although it has diffused socially over time (Kuchta 2002). In that sense the formal attire is both a material object and a social one that partly renders its meaning from the fact that it is associated with certain social groups.

The students’ relation to the formal attire varies. But already the term ‘formal attire’ in the last sentence obscures our understanding of the students’ own experience of encountering these garments. We must start at a much more basic level; with the name that the students themselves apply to those clothes. In interviews, some students call the attire “finkläder” in Swedish which may be translated into “finery” or “Sunday best” in English. Connected to the use of the word ‘finery’, some students also associate it with rare occasions like weddings, funerals and school proms. This is opposed to the students who associate it with the everyday working life and professional activity by calling it “formal” or “professional cloths”. This says something both about the students’ familiarity with this type of attire and about the relation between one’s social

position and the 'social' position of the formal attire. The variation in experience is further enhanced when we look at the students' embodied experience of actually wearing the formal attire.

One group of students express that it felt 'natural' or 'comfortable' to wear the formal attire. They express in general that they felt 'at home' in this setting and in those clothes. In the following interview quote, Gustav gives an answer that is telling for how the male students from Garden School talk about, or rather avoid talking about, the clothes they wore and how they felt wearing them. He says that it was nothing "odd" with wearing this type of attire, and then he basically makes a 'full stop'.

Yes... that was nothing... like that was nothing odd. [...] Well, I guess it is when the situation calls for it, I don't wear suit for school, I don't. (Gustav, GS)

Gustav signals that it was nothing strange wearing formal attire, it may not feel 'mundane' or 'normal' but at least 'natural' in relation to the current situation. Isabel's answer is telling for how the female students from Garden School talk about their experiences of the formal attire. Similar to the male students, they express that it felt 'natural' to wear it but they talk about their experiences more extensively. Isabel expresses a proficiency regarding different types of attire and makes divisions between different types of clothes and when it is appropriate to wear them.

MP: Did you reflect on what to wear before you left [for the role-play game]?

I: Oh, my god, yes! I brought formal; I didn't take my 'party-clothes' so to say. So I brought shirts, no t-shirts, no jeans. Or actually I brought jeans, but more like my school-formal cloths. And then a suit. I borrowed it from mum, ha, ha [laughs]. You wanted to... or I think it's better if... I become more... I try to adjust how I dress, then I feel good. I feel comfortable when I have nice clothes... like nice clothes that fit the context. (Isabel, GS)

The experience that the students from Garden School express are different from the experiences of the City School students. In the interviews, students from City expresses that they were unfamiliar and unused to wear this type of attire and that they felt "stiff", "uncomfortable" or "awkward" in it. For Emilia, to dress in formal attire was not 'natural'; she did not feel habituated to the jacket and skirt but for her it was a "shell" that she stepped into for a limited time because it was demanded by the rules of the game. This feeling of not fitting in with the formal attire becomes apparent in Rebecca's account of how it was to see her classmates from City School in the formal attire; this kind of attire made them look "mal placé", i.e. out of place, as Rebecca says, because she never would imagine them in such an outfit.



The City School students' experiences can be understood as examples of experiences of friction in relation to the attire. The friction ranges from the examples given above to Peter's bodily experience of wearing clothes that he was unused to, such as sore feet caused by new dress shoes. Another example of friction is given in the following quote:

E: I had jacket-trousers... or is it called so? No, suit trousers, not jacket-trousers! Ha, ha [laughs] That's how much I know about finery.

MP: It's not something you usually wear?

E: Absolutely not. Certainly not, I had to go and buy [...]. [I]t was like: 'How nicely dressed will the others be?' Me and Jessica went to shop and bought [special] clothes... but still we tried to buy clothes we could use later at other occasions too. But it was special with the clothes. [...] You feel stiff in a way, because I'm so unused to it. [...] At the same time, it was a bit fun too because [...] now I HAVE TO dress up, so then you might as well make a funny thing of it even though it felt a bit stiff. (Emma, CS)

Emma expresses unfamiliarity with this type of attire and she reflexively displays it by commenting on her inability to distinguish between specific garments and to use the right name for them. But she also dealt with the friction created by wearing these types of clothes with what may be understood as a 'comic relief' to counteract the feeling of stiffness. It is also telling that while both Gustav and Isabel express with confidence that they feel comfortable when they dress in accordance with the expectations of the situation, this is what the City School students are most uncertain about: what is it that the situation really calls for and how should I fit those expectations?

Above we saw that some students, in addition to comfort, felt pride, adult-like, professional, a heightened self-confidence and authority when wearing the formal attire. This can be contrasted to the students who felt stiff, awkward, and mal placé. These experiences can be understood in relation to the students' previous experiences and, more concretely, their social class background. The students who felt 'natural' wearing the formal attire share an upper class family background, while the students who experienced friction in various ways share a middle or lower class family background. The experiences of wearing the formal attire seems in this way to be related to one's class habitus.

### **Unfit as inferiority and social distinction**

Bourdieu argues that some practices feel and look "natural" because they "bear no mark of effort and no trace of the work that goes into their acquisition" since they are the result of "a gradual familiarization in the bosom of their family" (Bourdieu 1996b: 21; Khan 2011). However, there appears to be a problem if we just want to explain the students' experiences by

their direct prior habits of wearing formal attire. Because all students, across the board, say that they themselves were *unaccustomed* to wearing it. Despite that, the experiences they have when they wear it vary.

In order to understand this, we need to take into account another dimension too. The students' relation to the formal attire seems to be invested in a play with social distinctions and they seem to have an everyday understanding of who socially fits and does not fit, the formal attire. This becomes clear in the following account where Sarah, a Garden School student with lower class background, reflects on how it was to see her classmates at Garden in those clothes compared with the imaginary example of how it would be to see her classmates from her old school in a less affluent area in those clothes:

MP: [...] But it felt strange to see your classmates in those clothes?

S: Karl in my class... he dresses... all from Garden that I have seen, they dress pretty formal after all you know. It would be natural if you saw someone in school in a suit jacket. So therefore it did not feel so strange. If I would see any of my old friends who weren't as rich and stylish and all that I would be more surprised, it would feel more strange, but now everyone felt... everyone from Garden at least... it felt natural that they wore suits (Sarah, GS)

For Sarah this creates a feeling of inferiority; it is a deep-seated experience of not belonging in a milieu she wants to belong in and has aspired to become part of. However, one's relation to the formal attire can also function in the opposite direction as a way of marking that one does not belong to this milieu and that one has no aspirations to do so. For example, when Peter is asked whether he is used to wear this type of attire he answers that: "No god... you know I have [looks at his clothes] a pair of slacker jeans, converse or boots... slacky cloths." He also underlines that when he now, as an exception because he was demanded to, bought the formal attire he did it at "sale at Dressman" (a well-known low price and low-quality chain for men's fashion). For Peter, who comes from an upper middle class background strong in cultural capital, this is not just a neutral statement regarding his habits of dress and shopping, but it is an affectively charged distinction (see also Börjesson *et al.* 2016).

When I started at City School I was afraid that it would be really snobbish... that's why I don't wear such cloths, you know. For students at Garden School it may be less of a hassle to wear this type of formal clothes if we should talk about norms. I know a guy from Garden [who participated in the role-play session], that's his everyday dress and when I saw him at the airport when we were going home [from the session] he still had nice chinos, a nice checkered shirt – but he had no tie and the top button was undone, you know [teasing tone of voice]. [...] In many countries this role-play game is a big thing

and it is somewhat of an upper class culture over it. It is the nice people, who attends the nice schools who participate in this. Even if it should be open for all, I think it becomes like that anyway. Which school participates for Sweden? Well, it's Garden School and then City School (Peter, CS).

Here we see that the unease Peter feels is not really a feeling of inferiority, like in the case of Sarah. Rather the unease can be understood as a social distinction made to position himself as a socially and politically aware student on the side of the 'snobs' strong in economic capital but lacking in cultural taste.

The important conclusion from the analysis above is not how it felt to wear the formal attire. But given that the ambience of the architecture in the role-play locations, the talk about 'young leaders', etc. together with the formal attire for (some) students gave rise to a seamless feeling of entitlement. While the intentions of the role-play organizers may be that everyone should get a taste for this kind of world and feel entitled (you are young leaders!) for some students an opposite experience occurred and it functioned repulsive given their social background. It created rather a sense of de-entitlement to that world, a feeling of not fitting, of unfit. This is a feeling of not really belonging in the elite context. While this in some cases, as for Peter, may be more of a play with social distinction which rather strengthens his own position and sense of self, it may also result in a feeling of inferiority as in the case of Sarah who experiences a deep feeling of not belonging to this social milieu, a feeling that, in this situation, was sparked by the formal attire.

## **Part II**

In the previous part we analyzed the role-play game as a site that produced both entitled and de-entitled students. We saw that the students' previous experiences, shaped by their social background, were key to understanding this process. In the following we will approach the game as a value system. First, I will argue that the fact that the students are selected in order to be good representatives of their school enforces certain expectations of excellence. Secondly, I analyze what is at stake in the role-play game from the students' point of view.

### **To be selected**

It is likely that at many other schools it would be a low status symbol to participate and excel in a parliamentary role-play game, however, for the students at Garden School and City School it is a source of local school status and prestige to be selected for and to play the parliament game successfully. Karl explains that when he talked to his friends at another school

he chose not to tell them that “I went abroad and role-played [laughs]” and he continues “they would think that’s really weird and geeky almost” but at Garden School it is “cool and good” to get the opportunity. There is some form of prestige attached to being selected and this is an experience that is shared by most of the participating students, however, there are important differences in how they experience it and how they handle that status. This is what we will look closer at below.

At least to some extent, the prestige attached to the role-play game stems from the rationale for the selection of students. While the selection processes differ to some degree between Garden and City School, teachers at both schools express that they select students that are most suited to represent the school. At City School the students write a short motivation letter where they state what they can contribute to the role-play game as well as why they are a good representative of the school. The selection is then made based on this letter. At Garden School the procedure does not include a motivation letter and in the following quote, Hans elaborates on the criteria for selection:

We try to select students that are open. A student who is very well-read and smart but doesn’t have the right mind-set is inappropriate. You have to have a humble attitude, be open to new contacts. That’s almost the number one criteria. Number two is that the student is interested in politics and societal issues, and number three that the student is academically strong. [...] It’s not the average student who participates here. They are stronger in English, stronger academically and have a certain degree of self-confidence and social skills that are above average. (Hans, teacher GS)

According to Hans, the selectee is not the “average student”, but the student with certain strong skills and a strong ‘character’. This means that to be selected for the project also carries a value judgment: it means that one is viewed as a ‘good’, ‘successful’ or ‘high-achieving’ student. However, what also is apparent in the quote above is that the selection process, just vaguely, is based on formal curricular criteria (strong academically and in English). In addition, it is also about the student’s motivation, mind-set, social skills, and self-confidence. Here we see that criteria stemming (vaguely) from the formal curriculum merge with informal criteria from what may be understood as the unwritten curriculum of a Swedish elite school (Jackson 1966).

It is at least partly with this background that we should understand the prestige that students attach to the role-play game. The role-play game is not formally a graded activity, rather it seems to be a source of a more informal source of recognition in the school context. It is a way of becoming recognized as a good student in the eyes of teachers in a way that is not just about your ‘educational’ but also ‘personal’ qualities. Yet, in addition to this, to be selected also seems

to be intertwined with prestige in the peer group. Gustav says that: "I received a lot of praise from my classmates afterwards and I realized how much weight that is placed on this [role-play project] in the school". In the following quote, Isabel further elaborates on the status of the role-play game:

I mean, [the role-play project] is prestige, it really is. If you are selected, then you're good. My friends asked me a lot of questions: 'What's it like?' 'Was it serious?' like 'What happened there?' 'Did you contribute?' [...] I don't want to brag, but I guess I'm one of the best students at the school. And the teachers know that, they see that. So well, then they chose me. [...] They look at one's achievements overall. If you have a class as a teacher, you know which students that are at a higher level than the others. (Isabel, GS)

Isabel stresses that to be selected means that you are a 'good', and even part of the 'best' students. However, it also gives status and positive attention in the peer group. Yet, Isabel also touches upon the fact that being selected carries certain expectations of excellence, of really showing that you are one of the best. She says that you want to "perform and show that they have made the right choice".

However, there are important differences between students' talk about being selected. The students from City School treat the topic of the prestige from being selected much more carefully. Rebecca balances reluctantly around the fact that she has been selected which means that you are set apart as a 'better' student than those who were not selected, and challenges the egalitarian values she holds that no student is better than anyone else. In the following quote, she elaborates on the application process where the students should express why they would be a good representative of City School:

I wrote that all students at City School are very different and there are no [...] typical City-students, and therefore I think I would be a just as good a representative as anybody else. And maybe precisely therefore I'm good, you know. I wrote something like that, because I wouldn't say I'm a typical City-student... but now when I said so... Well I guess I am... but I'm probably not better than anyone else. If they [the teachers] wanted the best, they would have taken someone else. (Rebecca, CS)

Here we see that Rebecca proposes that it may have been her egalitarianism that made her a good representative of the school – not because *she* is 'the best student', but because she would be 'just as good' as any other. At the same time, Rebecca seems to acknowledge that being a selectee means something and that to be set apart potentially can change your status in some way. In contrast to Rebecca, Emma more clearly attaches prestige to being selected and reasons about how this fact must be treated with care in the peer group:

It's like Sweden's Jantelag [law of Jante], if one gets selected you don't talk about it and others don't raise you either, like. So when we speak about it [in the peer group at my school] it is very, very un-prestigious. [But our teacher] knows who would contribute more than others, or who... but not just that but also who would behave and you know like even if you are really good in school some always sleep in and such. (Emma, CS)

Emma thinks the teachers selected students who 'behave good' and more than others would be able to 'contribute', but at the same time she feels that it would be problematic at City School to express sentiments of prestige in relation to being selected.

For the students at Garden School the selection process sparks unproblematic feelings of prestige. These students incorporate with ease the perceived teacher's judgement that they are set apart because they are good or simply the best. In the interviews, and during the role-play game, they are eager to display this excellence. For students at City School the selection process generates strain. Aware of the fact that they are selected because they are a good, and maybe a 'better' representative than their classmates, causes a deep experience of unease. While these students really seem to feel ill-at-ease by being set apart, we must also acknowledge that the interviewees reflexive display of egalitarian values is part of the code of being a good student at City School. These egalitarian dispositions may seem at odds with what one would expect to find in an elite school context. However, it echoes results from studies of other selective schools in Sweden where students form strong egalitarian values (Törnqvist 2015) and more extensively of (cultural) elite identities in other Nordic countries where a form of "elitist egalitarianism" is a key part (Ljunggren 2015). While the Garden School students express an unproblematic 'elitist' sense of self, the City School students must toss and turn about their sense of being selected and thereby, in some way, exceptional, and need to counter these feelings with egalitarianism.

### **The game within the game**

Up to this point in the thesis, I have used the vocabulary of play. But when I mentioned the word 'role-play' or 'play' in the interviews several of the students reacted. Victoria says that: "role-play sounds very unserious I think, it didn't feel like a role-play really, it felt like you did something that was very important. It felt like one was... well like one really was a representative of Sweden". Patrik expresses something similar when he says that in the parliament "you did a *job* and not just played something for the sake of playing". As we see here, the participants do not experience their participation in the parliament game mainly as 'play'. Connected to the view of play as something problematic, the students also react to participants who 'over-involve' (Fine 1983: 217-222). Emilia notes a German delegate who

took the delegate role (too) seriously and when posing a question in a debate addressed himself in third-person as “the delegate of Germany wants to ask...”. That indicates an impressive skill, Emilia reasons, but with a somewhat derogatory laugh she also says that it was “silly” and she could not conceive herself involving in the parliament in that way. The over-involving participant appear to play, but rather than *playing* delegate one must engage with the political issues of the parliament with what we may understand as *authentic commitment*: “I take things very seriously, when I go in for something I do it wholeheartedly”, Emilia says. Peter develops this topic in the following quote:

No [I did not see it as play], not really, because what is interesting after all is that if a resolution passes it is sent off to [real high-level decision-makers]. And they’ve promised to read it and think it over [...] and not just discard what we’ve done. You cannot really see *that* as a child’s play. [...] It becomes serious and I have a strong interest. Play or not, I would always have wanted to make people think like me in the end. Or at least understand what they think and why. So I guess it was therefore I never saw it as a game or role-play. (Peter, CS)

Here we see that the role-play is not experienced by Peter as mere play but as an important work that can influence other people and, ultimately, real decision makers. The students take the task and themselves highly seriously and the role-play project is meaningful for them. Something important appears to be at stake. Although the students are reluctant to call the project play, several of them think that it is possible to ‘win’.

I think you can win. *Ish*. If you get a lot said... if you get much say on your resolution and if it passes too. And if you go home with the feeling that you’ve changed something, you have put your... if you have done a lot on your resolution and got a lot said then I think that one kind of wins. (Sarah, GS)

To win... I guess that’s like when you win [in a parliament] in general, your resolution passes! That’s an incredible prize. [...] But like, you sit in your committee, you succeed in passing a crucial point that you really like, that you really worked for: You succeed in passing it – you get incredibly satisfied. You fail in passing it – you get incredibly unsatisfied. (Peter, CS)

We see here that something is at stake for the students. They cherish a desire to ‘get a lot said’, to ‘have changed something’, to ‘pass a crucial point’ in a debate and ultimately to contribute to get their committee’s resolution passed in the parliament. When the students talk about this topic they use the word ‘to contribute’ (‘att bidra’) which basically means to come up with “smart” and “good” things, as the students say, that can aid the work with the resolutions. In that sense, the notion of making a contribution is connected to what it would mean to “win” in the parliament.

However, to speak metaphorically, there seems to be another game going on within the role-play game. The notion ‘to contribute’ is also at stake in a more encompassing *social game* that goes on in this elite school context. My observations suggest that during the meetings in the role-play game there emerged a kind of hierarchical role differentiation when the participants worked on their resolutions in small groups (committee and delegation meetings). This is experienced by several students. In the following quote Karl accounts for the work in the committee where he had a key role:

Often one says that there are different roles in classes in school, it wasn't really like that here but you saw trends [...]. There were the ones who did nothing at all and then there were those who drove the committee forward and then there were some who supported [...]. It was like this, when you did a lot [...] you had a leader role, you got... after a while you could feel that you like [...] when you proposed something you got more support than someone who did not do as much as you. (Karl, GS)

Karl sees three patterns of engagement emerge that are opposed to each other. First, they who ‘did nothing’ and they who ‘drove the committee forward’. But he also notes they who followed, the ‘supporters’ who were active but did not really made a contribution, as he says. Karl also suggests that to be one of those few who drove the committee’s work forward meant that one had influence over the other participants and the committee’s work. One had a ‘leader role’. According to *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) a leader is someone who “guides others in action or opinion; ... one who is ‘followed’ by disciples or adherents” (OED, *leader*, n.3a). To engage in the role-play game with authentic commitment, to desire the leader role, and to cherish the will to win is tied to strong expectations at Garden and City School. This seems to be what is at stake in the social game over what it means to be a ‘successful’ or ‘good’ student at these two schools. In that sense, it also relates to a wider meaning of the notion of leader, which *OED* also suggests, namely a “foremost or most eminent” person (OED, *leader*, n.3d).

Through my observations it becomes clear that appearing as ‘a contributor’ works as a sign of status within the peer group even outside the direct parliament setting. When I’m having pizza at a restaurant downtown with the Swedish students after a long day of work that ended with each committee voting on who will be selected to make speeches at the last day in the parliament, Karl says that: “We had four guys in our committee who didn’t say anything at all during two whole days. Completely silent. One guy in my committee even approached me and apologized for not contributing at all.” The others laugh at the story and Albert continues explaining that he and Gustav stood for ”ninety percent” of everything that was done in their committee. Therefore, he concludes, “it was self-evident that we should make the speeches”.



Now Karl looks embarrassed and explains defensively why he was not elected for a speech. A bit later during the dinner, Emma tells the other female students that Rebecca and she are going to make speeches in General Assembly and she says "I tell you, me and Rebecca came up with ninety percent of the content on the whiteboard yesterday during the brainstorming". This way of framing oneself as 'a contributor' in front of the others and the anguished need for explanation when you fail to be that person, keeps coming up during the dinner. The field notes say something about ways of engaging in the role-play game that is highly valued among the students as well as how to receive prestige in the student group.

When Emma, in the interview, rhetorically asks "Will I be completely quiet or will I really contribute?" it is not just her potential contribution to the solution of a pressing political issue that is at stake. What also is at stake is whether she will be able to engage in the role-play game in a way that is accepted among the students and teachers at her school and thereby become recognized as a good and successful student. Huizinga argues that to win a game means both to excel *in* the game, but also that this excellence tends to spill over and prize the winner with honor and esteem outside the game. The winner "wins something more than the game as such" (Huizinga 2014: 50). That means that contributing, winning an argument, passing a resolution, is not just winning circumscribed to the game itself, but potentially also outside of it, in the social game of the elite school context.

The analysis points towards what is at stake both in the role-play game and in the elite school context: namely to be(come) someone who leads, not follows. Bourdieu argues that a basic feature of a habitus that is attuned to a field is that one has, to speak metaphorically, developed a 'feel for the game'. It is what gives the game "a meaning and a *raison d'être*, but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake" (Bourdieu 1990: 66). Such a feel for the game includes the development of *illusio*, a belief that the struggles in the field are meaningful and have real consequences, that it is worth playing and that one has interest and desires its stakes (Bourdieu 1996a: 10, 166-173; Aarseth 2016). It is interesting that the students in this Swedish elite school context so clearly resemble what is at stake for all elites, namely influence and power. By simulating the 'commanding elite', the role-play game seems to stimulate and develop a certain socialized elite *illusio*, expressed in the students' desire to be a leader and the avoidance of being a follower. Both students at Garden and City School seem to share this *illusio* – which may seem at odds with the results from the previous section on the City School students' egalitarian elitism. In the following part it will be apparent that there are distinct differences

between the students' actual ways of playing the game, this will make us change the statement that all students share in the *illusio* somewhat.

## **Part III**

In the previous chapters, we collected a couple of pieces that let us put together a more coherent puzzle of how the role-play game is played in practice. We have, on the one hand, a basic understanding of the game as a value system seen from the students' point of view. We know what is at stake *for them* – both in the role-play game and in the more encompassing social game of elite schooling. On the other hand, we know that the students have different corporeal experiences of being in the game. Related to social background and school affiliation some feel at ease in this game, while others experience unease. While the project seeks to form entitled students, some students experience this weaker than others and some even felt de-entitled to the world of the 'commanding elite' that is simulated in the role-play. Both of these themes will be further analyzed in the following, although from a somewhat different perspective.

We know that the students value making a contribution and taking the leader role, but how is this done and experienced in practice? As we saw above, the students use the notion 'to contribute'. However, they also use the Swedish expression 'att ta plats' which is harder to translate to English. Literally 'att ta plats' means to take, or rather, appropriate space in the interaction with others and may be captured by the English expression 'to hold forth'. This directs our gaze in the following sections to the amount of speaking time that the students appropriate during meetings in the game and how they go about doing it. The interaction we will examine is played out in the setting of the delegation meeting where only Swedish participants are present.

### **Pull back / Hold forth**

Let us start with a very thin description of the delegation meeting. Table 1 below shows how many utterances each participant made during the two-hour meeting. It is important to note that the students themselves organized the meeting and there were no explicit rules agreed upon for how to get the floor, for example to raise one's hand and await one's turn to speak.

The distribution of utterances means something to the students. However, not in the form of a spread sheet. The students have a strong corporeal experience of the distribution and their hierarchical place in it. For them, something is at stake right there, it means whether one was 'able' to 'really contribute' or just became 'completely quiet', to recall Emma's words in the

previous section. In the following we will try to understand the distribution of utterances from four students' point of view. These four accounts are chosen because they to a large degree cover the variation in experience between the students.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF UTTERANCES

	Number of utterances
Albert (GS)	69
Jessica (CS)	64
Marcus (GS)	38
Emma (CS)	34
Karl (GS)	32
Gustav (GS)	24
Rebecca (CS)	17
Mia (GS)	13
Isabel (GS)	11
Sarah (GS)	8

In the following quote we see the meeting as it unfolds from Sarah's place in the distribution:

Well, I guess it was Jessica, Marcus and Albert... I've got the picture that they wanted to speak the most and they commented on every topic. And they... they took the steering role in a way and therefore... I wouldn't say that the other of us were silenced but it was more like you'd let them speak. I didn't say much during that meeting but rather let them be with their discussion and sometimes others broke in. But mostly it was them who held their meeting, if you could say so. (Sarah, GS)

For Sarah, and some other female students sharing a similar position, it was 'their' meeting, not mine. The students at the 'top' of the distribution are highly active, taking initiatives, making comments, responding, and leading the discussion. From Sarah's perspective, they have the 'steering role'. For every utterance Sarah made Albert or Jessica reeled off about nine. And the students who make many utterances are often directed towards each other in a turn-taking way which make them, and their intense interaction, the center of everyone else's attention. This consigns Sarah, and others, to an inactive spectator role at the side lines. Sarah seems to incorporate that place and to resign under it: after a while 'you'd let them speak'. The meeting sparks a habituated response in Sarah to 'pull back':

It was like this, if you didn't have a comment that you thought were worthy [laughs] to submit to the group [then you said nothing]. I didn't car... [interrupts herself] I wouldn't say I didn't care... I probably got nervous, I don't usually take that much space. If someone else wants that space I go down you know and during this meeting it was a bit like that, that I didn't feel that I had much to comment, so I sat back [...]. But... you did not really feel part of the group then because you didn't say much. So it felt like you were observing the others speaking, not really being part of the group. (Sarah, GS)

This response to pull back, or in Sarah's own words to 'sit back' and 'go down', does not just mean to resign from this particular meeting. It is not just the contribution (submitting something worthy to this meeting) that is at stake. Also intertwined with this is Sarah's feeling of membership in the group; the need to become recognized as a worthy member of *this* group. And her feeling of exclusion becomes much stronger because she knows and desires what is at stake in this role-play game as well as in the more encompassing elite school context: namely to be someone who leads, not someone who pulls back and follows the interaction at a distance. But to pull back is, for Sarah, not just a sudden feeling in this particular meeting, it rather seems to be a deep-seated disposition. She says that "I'm used to, and okay with, leaning back and letting the others speak".

What does the meeting look like from a point of view closer to the 'top' of the distribution of utterances? First of all, it should be noted that the students who appropriated a lot of space in the meeting are more reluctant to give accounts of their experiences of the unequally distributed speaking time. Either they avoid speaking about this topic, or address it in a 'thin manner' without fleshing out their experience. However, responding to a direct question, Gustav concludes, as if he just was stating a 'cold fact', leaving out his subjective experience, that:

Well, everyone did not speak equally much, as you [the interviewer] touch upon. But although it wasn't distributed exactly even, the speaking time was not so unequal that it affected the final outcome [of the meeting]. (Gustav, GS)

This is a typical way of approaching this and other questions for the male students at Garden School. Confidently, they account for their experience as if their 'subjective' view is the 'objective' account of what was going on in the situation. For Marcus, for example, the question of speaking time seems to be an unproblematic matter. He just states that: "they who didn't hold forth, didn't get to talk as much". If you do not have something that can push the 'final outcome' in a better position, you keep quiet, they reason, and if you have something to contribute with you can righteously hold forth. This way of reasoning legitimates, for the male students at Garden, the students' unequal speaking time and chances to express their views and opinions. They also share a strong conviction that the distribution of utterances directly mirrors the students' 'ability', their knowledge and technical competence regarding topics under discussion. However, this conviction is paired with a strong assuredness that *they* themselves have the ability, competence and knowledge that actually can affect the outcome positively. In the following quote, Gustav further develops this assumption:

I was very well prepared compared to many others. So probably that's why I took quite a lot of space, so to speak. [...] I keep objective in these situations you know, and look at it from a holistic perspective [...]. You have the aim in sight: this is what we want to achieve, and then you try to achieve it in the best way possible. And in this case, I felt... I assessed that the best way to achieve it was that I tell what I know, spread my thoughts (Gustav, GS)

Gustav does not, unlike Sarah, question his right to appropriate speaking time in the meeting or his membership to the group. Instead, he is assured that without him the 'outcome' would be worse and that his contribution was indispensable. Gustav, and the other male students at Garden School, do not pull back, rather they compete with the others in holding forth.

We find a third point of view on the distribution of speaking time among the students from City School. In the following quote Emma accounts for her experience from the meeting:

I wanted to take a lot of space, I wanted to take more space than I did. [...] [But] they [the 'Garden boys'] were... maybe it's smug of me to say that they always were like that, but very often... they took very, very much space, very often in every situation that I was with them in. So I don't think it was like if they wanted to prove themselves just in this meeting, I think they've got used to have that space. (Emma, CS)

Emma experiences that her right to speak in the meeting were circumscribed by the male students from Garden School who habitually appropriate speaking time from others. This also means that Emma's role in the meeting becomes defined and she understands it as in response to them.

And then, when they [the 'Garden boys'] notice that I react to it, because they discovered it themselves, then they backed off. When I got quiet and starred at them, then they silenced. But...so I don't think they thought about that, but when they did they backed down (Emma, CS)

Emma's participation in the meeting is not characterized by the self-questioning docility that we saw in Sarah's account where you 'sit back' and 'go down'. But neither is her participation characterized by the self-assured way of holding forth that we saw among the male students from Garden. Emma says that she wanted to speak more, but her space for doing it were constrained. She experiences her participation in the meeting as conditional and she holds forth 'in opposition'. This means that her motivation for acting in the meeting is different, which also tends to alter the style of it. She does not hold forth with the assured superiority of Gustav, but rather by breaking through in haste; by getting upset, by starring, by symbolically silencing herself.

Isabel's experience is, maybe, the hardest one to capture. It is a mix of the experiences we saw expressed by Sarah, by Emma, and by Gustav. In the following quote she accounts for the meeting:

Maybe you could have thought about this thing with boys and girls [...]. Distributed the word or something [during the meeting]. Or like this: 'Do you have something to say about this, Isabel?'... But now when I think through it one more time, noo. I mean, if you have something to say, you have to say it... Otherwise don't. That's your own responsibility to say and speak for yourself. For me it's more of an observation: Yes, the boys dared to hold forth more, but then the girls must sharpen up if they want to be at the same level. That's what I think. (Isabel, GS).

Isabel have a similar perception of the situation as Emma in that her participation and contribution was constrained by the male students' behavior. However, instead of holding forth in opposition she becomes silenced. This means that her position in the distribution of utterances is similar to that of Sarah. But their experiences differ in the sense that Isabel does not seem to incorporate this marginal position and she does not feel that her membership in the group is questioned. Rather than feeling that this is her habitual place, she experiences it as an exception. Further, Isabel's position resembles the view expressed by Gustav above, that students themselves are responsible for holding forth and that it depends to the utmost on the individual's ability and attitude.

Collins (2004) argues that a social agent's situational status can be understood by examining "where" he or she is "located" in small group interactions and he uses the spatial metaphors of center and periphery to capture this aspect: "There is a continuum from persons who are on the fringes of the group, just barely members, barely participating; others nearer the core; at the center is the sociometric star, the person who is always most intensely involved" (Collins 2004: 116). The more central a participant is in the interaction, the higher situational status he or she has. According to Collins, as an agent passes from one encounter to the other in the "chain" of interactions in everyday life, experiences of being at the center or periphery transform into a long-lasting disposition which is subjectively experienced as an expectation placed on oneself "to be a central member or a marginal one", "to dominate, or be dominated" (Ibid.: 118). The results from table 1 above then suggests that a situational status order is established in the meeting. Sarah has low situational status in this meeting but she does not expect to be at the center. Gustav, on the other hand, expects to be at the center and his position in the meeting affirms his expectations. Isabel and Emma also expect to be at the center and therefore they get frustrated in the meeting. They do not receive recognition from the group as they expect and in

a sense their realized situational status comes into conflict with their status expectations. In Emma's case this creates anger directed towards the male students from Garden School as the source of her constrained position in the meeting, while in Isabel's case it creates a feeling of shame since she directs the responsibility towards herself (see Kemper 2011; Collins 2004).

### **Struggles over one's place**

Table 1 above does not give the full picture of what is going on in the delegation meeting. A fuller picture emerges when we take table 2 below into account. It shows how many times each participant in the meeting interrupts another participant vis-à-vis is interrupted by another participant. If one has a positive interruption balance, this means that one interrupts more than one is interrupted, and vice versa if one has a negative balance. Now the picture of the meeting partly changes. Most strikingly, Jessica who was at the top of the distribution of utterances, is now in the lower-middle when we look at the interruption balance. Although she makes many interruptions, she is interrupted even more. Table 2 has a strong gender divide: while the male students has a balanced or positive interruption balance, it is negative for the female students. This mirrors in a way traditional gender expectations (cf. Cookson & Persell 1985: 25)

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF SPEECH INTERRUPTIONS AND INTERRUPTION BALANCE

	Interrupts	Interrupted	Balance
Albert (GS)	43	26	17
Marcus (GS)	26	16	10
Gustav (GS)	10	8	2
Karl (GS)	14	14	0
Rebecca (CS)	5	8	-3
Jessica (CS)	38	42	-4
Mia (GS)	4	8	-4
Sarah (GS)	1	5	-4
Isabel (GS)	5	11	-6
Emma (GS)	8	16	-8

What regulates the speaking time in the meeting if there are no formal rules or a chairperson who distributes the word? The observations above in relation to table 1 suggest that the students have a subjective sense of their 'right to speak' inherent to their habitus (Bourdieu 1984: 411). Some students feel entitled to 'hold forth' (like Gustav) while others have a strong, embodied disposition to 'pull back' (like Sarah). My observations in table 2 suggest that the feeling of one's own right to speak is mirrored as well by a sense of the other's right to speak. The amount of space one appropriates in the meeting is not just structured by an incorporated sense of one's right to speak; it is also the result of concrete struggle at the micro level and the formation of dominance relations where speech interruptions seems to play a key role.

This suggests a link between the situational status order that emerge at the micro level in the meeting and macro structures embodied in the students' habitus. Skeggs writes that the "embodied entitlement to space (physical and aural) is often a statement of social entitlement" (2004: 22; see also Kemper 2011: 14, 19-23). Even if my observations are limited, they suggest that the space one appropriated in the meeting is related to class and gender. We can recall the difference between Sarah's and Isabel's experience in the meeting. Isabel experience a confident and natural membership in the group and does not, like Sarah, question her right to be in the group based on the outcome of the meeting. While Isabel feels that she naturally fits in at the socially selective Garden School with her background in an upper class family with a parent who has been the CEO of a large, global company and who was educated at a prestigious university, Sarah, who comes from lower class background continuously has the precarious experience of not really fitting in, as if her membership was conditional. The space one appropriates also seems gendered. Gustav, and the other male students from Garden School, come from established upper class families similar to Isabel's. However, the place in the distribution and the feeling of entitlement to space differ strongly between male and female students from Garden School. The behavior of the male students from Garden School may be seen as expressions of a certain classed masculinity. Further, the difference between female students from Garden and City observed in the meeting suggests that there are different acceptable ways of doing femininity for the females from these two different social milieus. While the female students from Garden tend to pull back and accept their marginal place, the female students from City do not accept their place and struggle to change it. This we will look closer at below.

Table 2 shows the aggregated interruptions for each student. However, I have also observed the dyadic interruption relations between the students. By looking at the additional data on the dyads, or in other words the pairwise relations (Albert-Marcus, Albert-Gustav, etc.), we can determine whether there exists a dominance relation in the sense that one of the students in the dyadic pair to a larger degree interrupts the other (see Martin 2009: 21-22, 104). Looking at such dyadic relations (note that this is *not* shown in the table), we see that Jessica interrupts every other participant to a larger degree than she is interrupted by them respectively, *except* for Albert and Marcus who interrupts Jessica to a larger degree than she interrupts them respectively. Yet, Albert interrupts all other participants *including* Marcus more than he is interrupted by them respectively. Additionally, while Jessica is interrupted by all other participants (except one) at least one time, there are more participants who never interrupt



Marcus or Albert. In a way, this seems to suggest that Marcus and Albert receive more deference compared to Jessica. However, despite the fact that Jessica experiences much dominance behavior directed towards her, she does not respond with submissive behavior (Goffman 1982). It is by acting like this that Jessica claims her position in the group as someone who, in a way, refuses to be dominated. However, her position is precarious. While she may dodge dominance behavior directed towards her, she does not attain the same status recognition from the other students as, for example, Marcus and Albert do.

These quantified relations between the students is just a partial way of seeking to understand what it is that plays out in the meeting. The students also have a profound first-person experience of being there, negotiating these hierarchical power relations. To be interrupted does not just mean that one in a forceful way is denied the opportunity to voice one's view and opinion; it also means something to the students in a more profound way.

When the students account for the meeting much focus is directed towards the interplay between the “Garden boys” and Jessica. Albert, Marcus and Jessica compete in appropriating speaking time in the meeting and they have an unsurpassed ability to hold forth with confidence on every topic, even when they, at some point, have little of substance to add. While some students get upset with the trio’s way of dominating the meeting, it seems like Albert’s and Marcus’ way of acting passes, not necessarily without notice, as something unproblematic, but at least as what could be expected of them; as something ‘natural’. Their behavior is perceived in accord with the expectation placed on a male student from Garden School in this type of situation, while Jessica’s behavior in the meeting is perceived as a deviation from the established pattern in the meeting where female students have less dominant positions. This means that it is mostly Jessica’s way of acting that is explicitly commented upon (appreciative or not) in the other students’ retrospective interview accounts of the meeting. Before we look at these accounts, it is important to note that while most female students give account of their experience in the interviews, the male students from Garden School either pay no attention at all to the situation in the meeting, or avoid discussing the unequal speaking time and interruptions.

The following quote is an example of how Jessica's behavior in the meeting draws attention and the need for it to be commented upon:

Jessica reflects very much over who gets the word: is it a girl or boy? She is very feministic; she is super-fem... [interrupts herself] I mean it’s good, I really think. I started to think about it... I thought about how the boys get the word and things like that... I didn't

before, I didn't think in that way. So she [Jessica] got me thinking about that. (Isabel, GS)

Isabel's comment about Jessica's feminism is appreciative and she thinks that something can be learnt from it. However, this way of framing Jessica's behavior in the meeting as feminist is significant in another way too. While Albert's and Jessica's action profiles look the same – they make about the same number of utterances and interruptions in the meeting – the feminist framing gives Jessica's behavior a completely different meaning compared to Albert's. While the male students' behavior is seen as 'natural' and 'professional', as we will see below, and driven just by the intent to contribute to the issues at stake in the meeting, Jessica's behavior is seen as oppositional, political, and ultimately feminist. Thereby, it is *not* seen as directed towards contributing to improving the resolutions but rather towards the unequal distribution of speaking time itself and the male students from Garden the male students in general held forth at the expense of female students in the role-play game which she thinks is highly problematic. For example, as an assignment for a social science course, Rebecca and Emma decided to count how many times female vs. male participants got the word in the last day's negotiations in the parliament. "Eight / Twenty during one resolution" conclude Emma, and Rebecca problematizing: "it was more girls than boys in the parliament, but despite that many more boys spoke because many more boys wanted to speak and requested to have the floor". Emma calls us to think "why it is like that?" While Rebecca expresses a similar discontent with the situation like Jessica, she got irritated about how Jessica acted in the meeting and the interplay with the male students from Garden School, especially Albert. In Rebecca's view "Jessica is just looking to steamroller over him [Albert] for its own sake [...]. He thinks everything he does is good and she thought... well, that she has to stand up to the fact that he thinks he is the best." During the delegation meeting this manifested itself, from Rebecca's point of view, in the following way:

It was hard to get room to speak, because Jessica, Albert and Marcus took up a lot of space. Marcus has the right to hold forth, I think, because he knows what he's doing [...] unlike Jessica who didn't seem to care that she was a novice, she just marched to her own beat. [...] When you treat the resolutions you [...] should ask factual questions [...] whilst Jessica just said 'I think like this...' [mimics with ridicule]. So she just wanted to speak. [She said like that] and then she was quiet a short while to think, to come up with something, and then she said her personal opinion whether it was a good resolution or not [...]. I just: 'You don't say... okay'. But are you going to criticize it? Will you write an amendment? Will you bring it up in the parliament? (Rebecca, CS)

In a sense Rebecca sees Jessica's way of acting as if she was holding forth for the sake of holding forth 'in opposition', not with the intention of being 'a contributor'. But there is also another dimension to Rebecca's experience. She felt that there was a "conflict" that especially played out between the female students from City School and the male students from Garden. She says that already from the point when they met at the airport to leave for the role-play game "it was a bit like 'boys against girls', 'the professional against the un-professional', [...] 'they who know the drill and they who don't'." In a way she sympathizes with Jessica's intention and drive, but at the same time she feels the behavior gave the female students from City a somewhat 'bad image'. Rebecca felt she had to mediate between the two groups and show that "we were no bitches" and she adds that "it sounds really strange, but I'm super-divided" on the one hand feeling that the inequality in the meetings is deeply problematic, and on the other hand feeling that there is a risk of being labelled as 'bitch' if you hold forth. But this way of acting in the meeting is not just seen as problematic in the sense that one runs the risk of not receiving recognition from the male students at Garden School; even among the female students at City School it may be problematic.

What I noticed was that Jessica, like me, thought that it was super-irritating when the boys interrupted. But she started to interrupt as well. [...] I often share Jessica's point of view [but] maybe I don't take the step to start interrupting my friends and stuff like that, and I don't want to interrupt the boys either. I guess it's just in my bones, while she just got like this 'I don't give a fuck, I interrupt because they do it'. But I wouldn't say... I mean, yes, Jessica is feministic but I'm too, it's more about the method. (Emma, CS)

From Emma's perspective, Jessica started to play 'their' game; the "Garden boys" game. 'We' (female students from City) do not interrupt and hold forth at the expense of others, but 'they' (male students from Garden) do. She acts *as if* she were a "Garden boy"; holding forth, interrupting, etc. This means that while Jessica's way of acting does not seek nor attain recognition in the male group, neither does it attain full recognition from the female students.

The analysis above suggests that while the Garden students, especially the male students, buy into the game fully and express an undisputed 'will to win' (cf. Bourdieu 1978), the City students are constantly involved in a reflexive work over the game itself. Emma's and Rebecca's decision to count utterances in the last day's parliament sessions is an example of that, as well as Jessica's way of acting in the delegation meeting where she is reflexively directed towards the unequal distribution of utterances itself. Above, in part II, I argued that all students share into the elite *illusio* that is established in the game (the desire to lead), however, this can be altered somewhat now. Rather than *desire*, the City school students *know* what is at

stake, but reflexively tamper with on what premises you have the right to hold forth and lead, and how it should be carried out in practice. The word *illusio* literally means ‘in-play’ (Huizinga 1950: 11) and denotes the mind-set of being fully engrossed in the game and taking its outcome completely seriously. While the female students from City seems to ‘meta-play’ – reflexively negotiating the game itself – the male students from Garden School buys into the game and compete for speaking time.

### **Embodied winning and losing**

The role-play week ends with a full day of intense negotiations in the parliament. Here the committees are pitted against each other. The ‘standing committee’ enters the podium at the front of the parliament building in order to defend their resolution. The committees ‘on the floor’ ask critical questions and make speeches against the resolution while the standing committee answers and make speeches in favor. Each round ends with the final verdict whether the resolution that is up for treatment passes or fails. This is decided through a parliamentary voting procedure where majority rule applies.

A number of students have leading parts in this phase of the game because they have been elected by their peers to make speeches to either defend or criticize the standing resolution. To be selected for a speech is highly valued among the students, and the following quotes suggests that a notion of worthiness is connected to it.

There were some... ha, ha [derogatory grin] I have to say, there were very many who wanted to make speeches or speak in the parliament session but didn’t contribute at all to the committee work itself, just to prove themselves. (Isabel, GS)

Those delegates wanted, Sarah reasons, “to prove themselves engaged, without actually doing anything”. In other words, if you have distinguished yourself as ‘a contributor’ and attained a ‘leader role’ in the committee work, then you have proved that you are a good candidate for making a speech. The quote also suggests that certain social ‘profits’, such as prestige and enhanced status, are connected to making speeches in the parliament; it is a public recognition within the game that this delegate is a contributor, a leader. There is a general value attached to the bare fact of speaking publicly in the parliament. However, some speeches can be prepared and scripted in advance (the ‘easy’ speeches, according to the students), while the ‘heavy’ speeches requires the speaker to ‘improvise’, as the students say, because they answer to a speech the content of which is unknown until it is presented.

In the following we will look closer at Marcus', Rebecca's and Emma's experiences of standing at the podium to make a 'heavy' speech in the parliament. What is the corporeal experience of the speaker when he or she stands at the podium in front of all the other delegates? This is the moment in the game where everything is brought to its head: the entitling ambience of the parliament hall, the dark formal attire, the power language that the students are supposed to enact. Before entering the parliament hall, I chatted with Emma who soon was to make one of the 'heavy' speeches to defend her committee's resolution. In the following she accounts for her experience:

You didn't see my legs! They shook like this [shows with her hands] behind the podium. But I felt how nervous I was! I did prepare myself but this kind of speech you can't prepare fully. And I stumbled on words that I usually never stumble on, just because I was so awfully nervous, like this: 'colonize' I just 'colonohoho' and it just cloaked. And I just said: 'you know what I mean' [laughs]. That's not formal at all! It was very tough [to make this speech]. But I was so surprised that my voice didn't tremble, it didn't. [...] It didn't feel good, but in a way it was like this: wow! I did it! I really stood up there and talked, even if it didn't go well, I still did it. (Emma, CS)

We can recall Emma's experience of unease in relation to the formal attire and the role-play setting (part I). In the speech situation we see that this feeling of 'awkwardness' and 'stiffness' is sparked. It sits in the body; in the legs, in the muscles of the mouth, in the voice. Emma's committee's resolution did not pass in the parliament, but for Emma it was a 'personal win' to stand at the podium and make a speech in front of all the other delegates, it reaffirmed her sense of being a contributor. Rebecca, who was part of the same committee and also made a 'heavy' speech expands on the experience of the failing resolution.

We sat up there, in front of everyone in the parliament, and it was very careful when you're allowed to applaud and when you're not. And during the vote I sat next to a girl and she said 'there won't be any applause when we leave the podium, it will be completely silent' [anxious laugh] and then, then I got sad [laugh]. Because it's super-embarrassing... everyone else goes up, make their speeches – I actually made a speech myself, I think I've done a deed even if it wasn't a good speech I still did it, and me and Emma answered a lot of questions – and now we have the vote and then we just have to go back and take our seats in complete silence and then go home... that's embarrassing, that they applauded all other resolutions but not ours... but I don't care if the resolution passed or not. (Rebecca, CS)

While Rebecca says that she did not "care if the resolution passed or not", the voting procedure still formed a profound feeling in her. The absence of applause – this widely shared symbol for appreciation, approval, support – flashes a feeling of embarrassment, of shame in Rebecca. Both

Emma and Rebecca were viewed by others, and viewed themselves, as having made an important contribution to their resolution.

We can compare Emma's and Rebecca's experiences with that of Marcus who also made a 'heavy' speech in the parliament:

Well there [at the podium], I felt that I was so familiar with the topics we'd worked with in the committee so I felt that I knew exactly what we meant with our resolution and how we'd thought that it should work. So it felt completely natural and I just talked freely on the stage about why they who criticize our solutions are wrong and that they may not have understood what we actually mean. So, in that way I was pretty calm up there because I felt that I had control of what to say. (Marcus, GS)

Marcus admits that he was nervous right before the speech but it vanished when he entered the podium; then he felt "calm" but "alert", "self-confident" and that he had "control" of the situation. These are the opposite feelings compared to Emma. It is also significant that Marcus' committee's resolution passed in the parliament.

When the nervousness vanished, it benefited me because I could speak more freely and we passed... they voted for me, I succeeded in defending our resolution and they voted down the amendment against our resolution. And then the parliament passed our resolution which means... that I was able to defend it, I succeeded to convince them that our resolution was worthy to pass. That was... that was really fun. (Marcus, GS)

Marcus says that "they voted for me" and expresses a certain sense of pride because he was "able" to, and "succeeded" in, persuading the other delegates to vote for the resolution.

Through the analysis above we see that the game is brought to its head in the speech and voting situation. To pass one's resolution, i.e. to win, is attached to strong feelings of pride, while to lose forms a sense of shame. These emotions become stronger since what is at stake for the students, both in the immediate role-play game and in the elite school context, is to be 'a contributor'; to be someone who leads and thereby is able to influence and exercise power successfully. Shame is felt, in this context, when one is not able to be that person and thereby be recognized as a successful elite school student, while pride is experienced when one is recognized as being in that elite category.

# Concluding discussion

In this thesis, I took the identified research gap regarding what Swedish elite schools do with their students as my point of departure. Is a specific elite school student formed there? Do the school form specific dispositions that prepare the students to enter elite positions? I used the role-play game as an ethnographic site to study concrete habitus formation processes. In the game questions of valuation and differentiation are put to its head. However, the game lacks a teacher authority and it is not a graded activity, putting the students in a position where they must negotiate what it means to win and lose the game. This study has focused on what it means, and bodily feels like, to be a successful or unsuccessful student in this elite school context.

In the following I will briefly summarize and discuss the key results in relation to my research questions. I will end with a discussion pointing towards further research. My first research question concerns how the students negotiate valuation and differentiation within the game. *What constitutes successful and unsuccessful ways of playing the role-play game from the students' point of view and how is it tacitly and explicitly negotiated and struggled over?*

My findings suggest that, from the students' point of view, the game is about being recognized as a 'contributor' and 'leader', and this in turn is associated with social status and prestige in the peer group. I have also argued that a social game is played out within the role-play game. The notion of being a 'contributor' and 'leader' means to be a 'successful' student in the more encompassing elite school context too. I have argued that we may understand this as if the role-play game stimulates and develop a certain elite *illusio* in the students. They learn to value what is at stake in the field of power.

While all the students in a way tend to know and acknowledge the stakes in the game, there are important differences between students from Garden School and City School that I attempted to capture with the concepts 'meta-play' and 'in-play'. The students from Garden School buys into the game and embodies a strong will to win, they are in a sense in-play. However, the male students from Garden combine this disposition with a strong feeling of entitlement to aural space in the role-play game's meetings, while the female students from Garden tend to have more docile and dominated positions (cf. Cookson & Persell 1985: 25). The students from City School know what is at stake but rather than being in-play they tend to meta-play the game. Something chafes for them in relation to the game and they must reflexively work with the

elitism they encounter there and the egalitarian values they hold and that characterizes the school milieu at City. This finding resembles with results from Törnqvist's (2015) ethnography where she shows how egalitarianism and elitism is combined, and brought into tension, in the forming student ethos at a selective upper secondary school in Sweden.

While the elite school concept can unveil important phenomena, these results also suggest that it can veil differences between schools within the elite school category. The study shows important differences between students at Garden School and City School when they are required to practically negotiate what it means to be a 'successful' student. While the reflexive disposition characterizes the successful student at City School, the undisputed will to win characterizes the successful Garden School student. While the reflexivity the City students embody is highly valued at City School, and probably would be highly valued in for example academia and other intellectual elite occupations that require a specific form of analytical and critical thinking skills, it tends to disadvantage them in *this* particular game that simulates the commanding elite. For example, we saw that while Jessica and Albert appropriated the same amount of speaking time in the meeting, they did not attain the same valued recognition as successful players. Jessica's reflexive way of playing was labelled as 'feminist' and 'oppositional' and the competitive play to win of the male students from Garden School was seen as 'natural' and 'professional'.

To recall Lamont's (2012: 213) words, the school milieus seems to constitute different "grammars of worth" and in the game these are activated and pitted against each other. We should interpret these results towards the background of the schools' different profiles; the schools recruit different types of students and to some extent constitute differently classed, gendered, and political student cultures. This study suggests that there are important differences between the schools and the type of student that is admitted and formed there. Further studies of competing grammars of worth in the Swedish elite school segment are needed. The results from this study suggest that there may be differences with regard to student formation between the elite educations located at the cultural vs. economic pole of the schooling space identified by Palme (2008), but this needs further investigation.

My second cluster of research questions regard the corporeal experience of playing the game. *How do the students experience the embodied practice of playing the game? How is the experience mediated by the students' habitus?*

The game is a very corporeal project. The students dress in formal attire, they reside in impressive parliamentary buildings, they use a language similar to agents of dominating



positions. In one way this is a typical role-play requisite to enhance the authenticity of the simulation, but it does something more too. The framing, combined with the fact that this select group of students are labelled as future leaders and addressed, and listen to, by real high-level leaders, also intends to shape a corporeal sense of entitlement. They should be and feel like leaders with all of their body.

But my findings suggest that not all students experienced corporeal entitlement. Some students felt ‘out of place’ in this setting, while other students felt ‘at home’. These experiences can be understood in relation to previous class related experiences the students enter the game with. The upper class students’ tended to experience fit with the simulated elite world, while the middle and lower class students’ experienced unfit. The former group of students tended to have a sense of entitlement to this elite world and could envision themselves as future leaders, while the latter group felt de-entitled to the social world simulated in the game, a feeling of not fitting in or belonging in the elite context. Instead of entitlement, they felt inferior. This resembles previous research on the importance of social class for the experience of ease and unease in elite school settings (Bourdieu 1996b; Khan 2011). However, this study also suggests that unease not always means inferiority, but can be a social distinction under certain circumstances.

We can now proceed to the second finding related to corporeal experience. In the role-play game project there is a tension between the *content* level that teaches democracy and cooperation, and the *form* of the interaction in the game that tend to make the students learn competition and domination. The competition for speaking time in the game formed hierarchical status and power relations between students. The students have a strong corporeal experience of the distribution of speaking time and their hierarchical place in it. My findings suggest that some students feel entitled to ‘hold forth’ while others have a strong, embodied disposition to ‘pull back’. The observations, although limited, suggests that the entitlement students felt to aural space tended to be related to social class background and gender (cf. Skeggs 2004: 22; Bourdieu 1984: 474). However, when we take this Bourdieusian perspective there is a tendency to overestimate the role of the sense of one’s right to speak, as a property of habitus, in structuring interaction at the micro level. While my study observes what can be understood as social reproduction, the findings also suggest that it is important to take the situational struggles over space into account. The status to speak is negotiated and is both accorded and received (cf. Kemper 2011). In some cases, like Collins (2004) suggests, when expected and realized position in the game’s status order did not coincide, we saw signs of

resistance and possibilities for change occurred. The female students from City School did not incorporate their assigned place, but challenged it reflexively by for example holding forth in opposition.

Previous research has found that elite schooling often *teaches* cooperation skills, but tend to be characterized by a competitive culture. While Cookson and Persell (1985) see this as an implicit effect of the conditions of elite schooling, this study shows that Garden School and City School explicitly chose to use a competitive game as a pedagogic device. This means, to recall Fine's (2008: 247) study of high school debating, that "winning", rather than "reaching consensus", finding "truth", or "solving the problem", is made into the measure of "success". My findings add that what the student learns about competition and domination is dependent on his or her acquired position in the game. You learn different things whether you have a central or peripheral position in the game's interaction pattern, or if you have a dominating or dominated position in the power relations produced between students in the game (Collins 2004). In a sense, while some students learned to lead, others learned how it felt to be led. By making 'winning' the measure of 'success' these unequal relations tend to be legitimated and the students incorporate their place in the game as a deserved and objective measure of their ability. While research on elite schooling tends to highlight that students are socialized into a common elite culture, these results suggests that the sorting processes *within* elite schools must further be taken into account.

In this study I have investigated an event limited in time and that clearly breaks with the students' ordinary school activities. Further, ethnographic studies could preferably focus habitus formation processes over a longer period of time and located in the students day-to-day schooling routine. Will such studies yield similar findings, or does the everyday experience tells another story? My study indicates differences in socialization processes between *different* kinds of elite schools. Further studies could systematically investigate such differences between for example 'cultural' and 'economic', as well as 'social' and 'meritocratic', elite schools with regard to socialization. Khan (2012b: 373) argues that more research on non-traditional elite schools (e.g. nonmale, nonwhite) is needed. My study is a step in that direction, making the concept of elite schools, and the students they tend to shape, more manifold.

# References

- Aarseth, H. (2016). Eros in the Field? Bourdieu's double account of socialized desire. *The Sociological Review*, 64(1), 93-109.
- Anderson, E. (2002). The Ideologically Driven Critique. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(6), 1533-1550.
- Barth, F. (1969). *Models of Social Organization*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.
- Bergman Blix, S., & Wettergren, Å. (2015). The emotional labour of gaining and maintaining access to the field. *Qualitative Research*, 15(6), 688-704.
- Bihagen, E., Nermo, M., & Stern, C. (2013). Class origin and elite position of men in business firms in Sweden, 1993–2007: The importance of education, cognitive ability, and personality. *European sociological review*, 5( 29), 939-954.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and Social Class. *Social science information*, 17(6), 819-840.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction : A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996a). *The Rules of Art : Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Cambridge: Polity press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996b). *The State Nobility : Elite schools in the field of power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Breen, R., & Jonsson, J. O. (2005). Inequality of Opportunity in Comparative Perspective: Recent Research on Educational Attainment and Social Mobility. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31, 223-243.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Böhlmark, A., & Holmlund, H. (2011). *20 år med förändringar i skolan: Vad har hänt med likvärdigheten?* SNS förlag.
- Börjesson, M., Broady, D., Dalberg, T., & Lidegran, I. (2015). Elite Education in Sweden – A Contradiction in Terms? In C. Maxwell & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Elite Education – International Perspectives. Understanding the implications of educating elites on schooling systems*. forthcoming London: Routledge.
- Börjesson, M., Broady, D., Le Roux, B., Lidegran, I., & Palme, M. (2016). Cultural capital in the elite subfield of Swedish higher education. *Poetics*, 56, 15-34.
- Camic, C. (1986). The Matter of Habit. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(5), 1039-1087.
- Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Cookson, P. W., & Persell, C. H. (1985). *Preparing for Power : America's elite boarding schools*. New York: Basic Books.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Crossley, N. (2013). Habit and Habitus. *Body & Society*, 19(2-3), 136-161.
- Dewey, J. (2012). *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*: Digireads.com Publishing.
- Durkheim, É. (1956). *Education and Sociology*. New York: Free Press.
- Fangen, K. (2005). *Deltagande observation*. Malmö: Liber ekonomi.
- Fine, G. A. (1983). *Shared Fantasy : Role-playing games as social worlds*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago P.
- Fine, G. A. (2008). *Gifted Tongues: High School Debate and Adolescent Culture*: Princeton University Press.
- Forsberg, H. (2015). *Kampen om eleverna: Gymnasiefältet och skolmarknadens framväxt i Stockholm, 1987–2011*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Gaztambide-Fernandez, R. (2009). *The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School*: Harvard University Press.
- Gaztambide-Fernández, R., Cairns, K., & Desai, C. (2013). The Sense of Entitlement. In C. Maxwell & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Privilege, Agency and Affect : Understanding the Production and Effects of Action*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A., & Howard, A. (2012). Access, status, and representation: Some reflections from two ethnographic studies of elite schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 43(3), 289-305.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goffman, E. (1951). Symbols of Class Status. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2(4), 294-304.
- Goffman, E. (1961). Fun in Games. In E. Goffman (Ed.), *Encounters : two studies in the sociology of interaction*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *Strategic interaction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goffman, E. (1982). The Nature of Deference and Demeanor. In E. Goffman (Ed.), *Interaction ritual : essays on face-to-face behavior*. New York: Pantheon.
- Golding, W. (1954). *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber.
- Göransson, A. (2007). *Maktens kön : kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet*. Nora: Nya Doxa.
- Holmqvist, M. (2015). *Djursholm : Sveriges ledarsamhälle*. Stockholm: Atlantis.
- Huizinga, J. (1950). *Homo Ludens : A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*: Martino Fine Books.
- Jackson, P. W. (1966). The Student's World. *Elementary School Journal*, 66(7), 345-357.
- Jerolmack, C., & Khan, S. R. (2014). Talk Is Cheap Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 43(2), 178-209.
- Kemper, T. D. (2011). *Status, power and ritual interaction: a relational reading of Durkheim, Goffman, and Collins*. Farnham: Ashgate Pub.
- Khan, S. R. (2011). *Privilege: The making of an adolescent elite at St. Paul's school*: Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ.
- Khan, S. R. (2012a). Elite identities. *Identities*, 19(4), 477-484.
- Khan, S. R. (2012b). The Sociology of Elites. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38(1), 361-377.
- Koselleck, R. (2004). *Futures past : on the semantics of historical time* (K. Tribe, Trans.). New York ;: Columbia University Press.
- Kuchta, D. (2002). *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850*: University of California Press.
- Lamont, M. (2012). Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38(1), 201-221.

- Lidegran, I. (2009). *Utbildningskapital: om hur det alstras, fördelas och förmedlas*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Ljunggren, J. (2015). Elitist egalitarianism: Negotiating identity in the Norwegian cultural elite. *Sociology*, 0038038515590755.
- Martin, J. L. (2003). What Is Field Theory? *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(1), 1-49.
- Martin, J. L. (2009). *Social Structures*: Princeton University Press.
- Martin, J. L. (2011). *The Explanation of Social Action*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2001). *The German Ideology. Part one*. London: Electric Book Co.
- Melldahl, A. (2015). *Utbildningens värde : fördelning, avkastning och social reproduktion under 1900-talet*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The Power Elite*. London: Oxford U.P.
- Nazli, R., & Kesken, J. (2014). Symbols of power in business and how it's represented through business media: A semiological analysis of top five international business magazines. Oxford English Dictionary. "leader, n.3a". Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/106597?rskey=M2ZL0g&result=1&isAdvanced=false> August 16, 2016
- Oxford English Dictionary. "leader, n.3d". Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/106597?rskey=M2ZL0g&result=1&isAdvanced=false> August 16, 2016
- Palme, M. (2008). *Det kulturella kapitalet : studier av symboliska tillgångar i det svenska utbildningssystemet 1988-2008*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Pareto, V. (1976). *Sociological Writings*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Parsons, T. (1959). The school class as a social system: Some of its functions in American society. *Harvard educational review*, 29(4), 297-318.
- Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 431-444.
- Richardson, G. (2004). *Svensk utbildningshistoria : skola och samhälle förr och nu*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Rist, R. C. (2007). On Understanding the Processes of Schooling: The Contributions. In A. R. Sadovnik (Ed.), *Sociology of education : a critical reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Ryen, A. (2004). *Kvalitativ intervju : från vetenskapsteori till fältstudier*. Malmö: Liber ekonomi.
- Sandgren, P. (2015). *Internatskolorna: Att fostra en elit*. Stockholm: Atlantis.
- Scott, J. (2008). Modes of Power and the Re-conceptualization of Elites. *The Sociological Review*, 56, 25-43.
- Skeggs, B. (2004). Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of class, gender and sexuality. In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism after Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Swartz, D. L. (2002). The Sociology of Habit: The perspective of Pierre Bourdieu. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*, 22(1 suppl), 61S-69S.
- Swedish Research Council and Centre for research ethics and bioethics at Uppsala University. Informed consent. *Codex: rules and guidelines for research*, (August 16, 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.codex.vr.se/en/manniska2.shtml>
- Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in Action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 273-286.
- Törnqvist, M. (2015). *Performing Politics, Producing Privilege : Student formation at an internationally oriented Swedish upper secondary school*. Working Papers du CESSP, no. 3h, juin 2015. Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique.
- Vaisey, S. (2014). The "Attitudinal Fallacy" Is a Fallacy : Why We Need Many Methods to Study Culture. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 43(2), 227-231.

- van Zanten, A. (2010). The Sociology of Elite Education. In M. W. Apple, S. J. Ball, & L. A. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of the sociology of education*. London: Routledge.
- Wacquant, L. (2004). *Body & Soul : Notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford ;: Oxford University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2014). Homines in Extremis: What fighting scholars teach us about habitus. *Body & Society*, 20(2), 3-17.
- Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords : a vocabulary of culture and society*. London: Fontana.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labour : how working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.
- Willis, P., & Trondman, M. (2000). Manifesto for" Ethnography". *Ethnography*, 1(1), 5-16.
- Wrong, D. H. (1961). The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology. *American Sociological Review*, 26(2), 183-193.
- Östh, J., Andersson, E., & Malmberg, B. (2013). School Choice and Increasing Performance Difference: A Counterfactual Approach. *Urban Studies*, 50(2), 407-425.

# Appendix

## Interview guide

The interviews were open-ended, however, below I will account for the typical themes and questions that were included in the interviews. In addition to this, a number of themes such as experiences of current and previous schooling, leisure activities, family situation and parental social background (education and occupation) were covered in all interviews.

The interviews were most often introduced by the following opening question: What is the first thing you come to think of when recalling the role-play week? After that, the chronology of the role-play session and the different activities were used to provide a basic structure to the interview. After the initial question we usually went on to talk about the preparatory activities such as the preparation meeting in school before role-play as well as travels to and from the session. After that we slid over to talk about the *inauguration, committee work, delegation meeting, lobbying*, as well as the last day's *parliament session*. Most often we also covered side activities such as guided tours, dinners, free time, etc. I asked the following type of questions: Can you describe the activity/meeting from your point of view? What happened? What did it felt like being in that situation? Can you describe your bodily experience?

While talking about these activities, using the session's chronology as guide, a number of themes emerged from the students' stories and accounts. Additionally, I had in advance

identified key situations and events from my observations and during the interviews I used field notes on these situations to provide guiding. Below follows a list of key themes that emerged during most interviews as well as examples of questions that I asked.

#### *The role-play project and 'the stakes of the game'*

- If you would explain the role-play game to someone who did not participate, what would you say?
- What does it mean to be a delegate? How would you describe that role?
- Did you think about the project as 'play'/'game'? If not, what is the project to you?
- Is it possible to win/lose the role-play game? How?
- What is your motivation to participate? What is at stake for you?

#### *Selection process*

- How did you experience being selected for the role-play?
- How did your friends/classmates/family/etc. react to the fact that you were selected?
- What does the selection process look like at Garden/City School? How were you chosen? Who is responsible for selecting students?
- On what grounds/criteria do you think students were selected? What do they look for?
- Why do you think you were selected?

#### *Speaking time*

- Was the word equally distributed in this meeting or did someone speak more than others?
- Some students spoke more than others during this particular meeting, how did you experience that? What did it bodily feel like being in that meeting?
- During this meeting you spoke little/a lot, can you expand on your experience of that?
- During this meeting you seemed nervous/confident/etc. [share field notes on e.g. body language, things said, etc.], can you expand on your experience of that?
- During this meeting I observed a tension in the group/around this question, can you expand on your experience of that?

#### *Speeches*

- How were delegates selected for speeches? Who were selected?
- Did you want to make a speech? Why/why not?
- How did you experience making a speech? What did it feel like bodily?
- What makes a speech better/worse according to you? Can you give examples?
- Person X and Y made speeches, what did you think about them?

#### *Formal attire*

- What did you wear? Can you describe the clothes in detail?
- What did it feel like to wear this type of clothes?
- Are you used to wear this type of clothes?
- How do you dress in your everyday school life?
- How did you experience seeing your classmates in this type of clothes?