

**London School of Economics and Political
Science**

Between success and dislocation:
*The experience of long-range upward mobility
in contemporary Chile*

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at the London School of Economics and Political Science
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Declaration of originality

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation examines the experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. Internationally well-known for the implementation of pioneering and radical neoliberal reforms, Chile has both high rates of occupational mobility and a strong trend towards social closure at the top. Based on an extensive qualitative study, this research focuses on those who best represent the embodiment of the meritocratic ideal across Western nations: the long-range upwardly mobile coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and reaching high-status occupations after attending elite universities. Endorsing an increasing sociological interest in the study of the elites, this thesis argues for the need to move from the conventional occupational-based approach towards a *cultural* and *multigenerational* perspective on social mobility. In particular, it acknowledges the crucial significance of concepts such as cultural capital and cultural repertoires used in tandem with three different sources of multigenerational transmission underpinning upward mobility: families, schools, and high-status occupations. The findings reveal a *double-faced* experience associated with a long-range upward trajectory in the Chilean context: while one of these faces indicates the lingering class dislocation the long-range upwardly mobile experience regarding both their ties of origin and destination, the other side emphasises the constant search to re-find belonging and meaning to their displaced sense of self in the social space. The variability fashioning this double-faced experience is largely dependent on a number of intervening or mediating factors underpinning their upward trajectories: geographical origin, the cultural repertoires tied to their backgrounds of origin, gender, school trajectory, and the specific occupational settings sustaining their professional lives. Drawing on these findings, this doctoral dissertation contributes to reorient research on mobility, both in the Global South and North, by promoting greater cross-fertilisation between the contributions emerging from cultural sociology with a broad multi-generational view of inequality.

To my grandparents: Tito, Amine, Nofa and Lalo

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Preface

My desire to document the lives of the long-range upwardly mobile in contemporary Chile is rooted in my family history. The main figure in this personal story is my paternal grandfather. The son of a thriftless father with Croatian roots and a stern Catholic mother of Bolivian descent, he was born in the north of Chile in the early 1930s during the collapse of the old saltpetre industry in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Due to the stark poverty and the peripatetic life of his family, he was sent at an early age to a boarding school run by the Lasallian congregation. With only sporadic contact with his family, it was behind the closed doors of this austere religious institution where my grandfather spent the bulk of his childhood and all of his adolescence. In spite of the painful estrangement from his family, he stood out as a strong student, and received a relatively broad humanistic education. In the poor nation that Chile was at the time, that was an uncommon experience for students sharing my grandfather's class background.

In the early 1950s, with the backing of a priest, my grandfather managed to enter Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile—a confessional private university, traditionally educating Chile's Catholic elites. After a long and arduous decade of undergraduate studies, he obtained a professional degree in law. In the 1960s, when only a small minority attended higher education, access to a respected university offered significant opportunities for stable employment and was a solid marker of distinction. In due course, this allowed my grandfather to develop a career as an independent lawyer in a small town located a few miles from Santiago and enabled him to support a rapidly growing family. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite the troubles he experienced as a supporter of the Salvador Allende government and the ensuing political repression under Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, his family's economic situation prospered, enabling their children to receive private education

and subsequently graduate from university. As my grandfather grew old amid an economic prosperity in sharp contrast with his humble origins, he had good reason to be proud of his achievements and those of his progeny.

And yet, all his worldly success notwithstanding, my grandfather's upward trajectory was accompanied by a combination of feelings of pride and insistent thoughts of inadequacy and self-doubt. Behind these feelings lay an enduring dislocation tied to his upward mobility—one persistently shaping a displaced sense of social belonging and self-identification. His upward trajectory increasingly distanced him from his family of origin, among whom he was unable to find much support or understanding to face the challenges he experienced throughout his adult life, although this never meant rejecting his social origins or not taking care of his own ageing mother. Even though my grandfather interacted with upper class people at university and subsequently in his job as a lawyer, he always felt they belonged to a different world—economically, culturally, and socially—set apart from his own. A powerful and stubborn solitariness escorted my grandfather's experience of upward mobility; the 'hidden injuries of class' (Sennett and Cobb, 1972) that he carried with him never faded away.

Inspired by this personal (his)story, this research is an attempt to examine the experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chilean society. In this endeavour, I seek to understand how such trajectories unfold in a nation that has undergone profound transformations over recent decades, but also one which continues to be haunted by a past and present marked by durable inequalities.

[L]a saisie du singulier passe nécessairement par une compréhension du
général.

—Bernard Lahire, 1999

No social study that does not come back to the problems of
biography, of history and of their intersections ... has completed its intellectual journey.

—C. Wright Mills, 1959

Chapter 1.

Between Success and Dislocation.

The Experience of Long-range Upward Mobility in Contemporary Chile

‘Había una muralla [there was a wall]. Your family was behind you. Your family had the vision that beyond that wall there was something interesting, something of value. But they did not have a clear idea of what it was But they still pushed you to climb it up and cross it. “Go for it”, they said. And you said to yourself: “yes, let’s do it”. But not really sure about it And you crossed [the wall]. Feeling alone and lost but still moving forward. And then, at some point in that long, difficult journey, you had to start to... separate la paja del trigo [the wheat from the chaff] ... and try to find yourself and your place’.

Between Success and Dislocation: the Search for Belonging

These were the reverberating words and images with which Ana¹, an engineer in her mid-30s, ended our long series of conversations about her experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile.

Ana’s upward trajectory is certainly remarkable. It not only offers an outstanding example of the principle of meritocracy proclaimed across capitalist societies in the West: the idea that individual talents and efforts alone, not background, play the most significant part in determining social destinations. It also unfolds in a society, like the rest of the Latin American nations, showing persistently high levels of inequality and traditionally putting formidable barriers to the ascent of those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds. Against the odds,

¹ In order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants, all names used throughout this research are pseudonyms. More on this issue in Chapter 4. For a list of all the protagonists (like Ana) featuring throughout this research, see Appendix 1 on page 312.

Ana made her way up the ‘social ladder’ through the nation’s oldest and most renowned academic institution—Universidad de Chile—opening up professional horizons that remain out of reach for most Chileans. Ana had good reason to feel proud of her glittering accomplishments, widely considered as a striking example of meritocratic ‘success’ in Chilean society.

Significantly, however, this herculean success was experienced as crossing a ‘wall’. Throughout our dialogue, Ana constantly underlined the strains and uncertainties shaping her unlikely social ascent: standing out alone at school, struggling with both class and gender marginality at university, and navigating a competitive labour market dominated by high-status males—and often providing disappointing or elusive professional rewards. ‘I thought I was about to eat the world,’ Ana remarks, giving voice to her high expectations after obtaining her professional degree. ‘But it is not like that,’ she briefly, but tellingly, notes. More broadly, and perhaps more importantly, this ‘long, difficult journey’ has left Ana in ‘an unstable balance’: attempting to find her way in a harsh professional world, but constantly supporting her ageing parents financially, this unstable state affects her material, emotional, and relational wellbeing. ‘I am in the middle. I see poverty and I see wealth,’ she says. With one foot still in her family of origin on one side of the wall and another stepping into highly different social and cultural milieus on the other side, Ana finds herself in a highly fragile position between her ties of origins and those of destination. It is largely due to these reasons that her extraordinary success does not feel as such.

Ana’s troublesome narrative points to a larger tension tied to the experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. Compared with her parents, Ana has undoubtedly benefitted from the prospects opened up for her by attending an elite university and performing a high-status occupation, including the financial rewards and opportunities for

individual growth. Yet at the same time, the cohesive social ties that provide those opportunities with meaning were disrupted along the way: Ana has struggled, and continues to do so, to place that success beyond her own nuclear families and as part of wider social bonds that confer her achievements with lasting meaning. Ana's meritocratic success thus remains inextricably linked to her class dislocation.

Ana's class dislocation resonates with a long strand of sociological work influenced by the 'dissociation' hypothesis and tackling the disruptive consequences of mobility on individuals. Opposing the 'acculturation' hypothesis—emphasising both the search for identification and the psychologically smooth transitions to their new social environment among the upwardly mobile—the voluminous research tied to the dissociation hypothesis emphasises the lingering moral dilemmas, aching self-doubts, and deep sense of ambivalence tied to upward mobility (e.g., Bourdieu, 1989, 2004[2002]; Friedman, 2014; Naudet, 2011; Reay *et al.*, 2009). This research thus portrays the experience of upward mobility as implying a durable 'emotional toll' (Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Reay, 2005), 'hidden injuries' (Cole and Omari, 2003; Sennett and Cobb, 1972), 'habitus dislocation' (Aries and Seider, 2005; Lehmann, 2014), or the upwardly mobile as 'uprooted' (Hoggart, 2009[1957]), 'caught in the middle' (Grimes and Morris, 1997), or 'uneasy hybrids' (Lucey *et al.*, 2003). Ana could well identify herself with several such descriptions.

Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties intertwined with her long-range upward trajectory, Ana remains keen to separate 'the wheat from the chaff' in her efforts to 'try to find yourself and your place' in Chilean society. Ana presents herself as an active agent in her search to re-find meaning and belonging, however difficult that quest is and remains. Yet this facet of

Ana's long-range upward trajectory is something rarely found in the literature.² To a large extent, this is due to the fact that the contending hypotheses tend to ask whether the effects of mobility on individuals are overall positive or negative, overlooking the variability also tied to this experience both within and across national contexts (e.g., Ingram, 2011; Lee and Kramer, 2013; Naudet, 2018[2012]). But the lack of attention to the ways in which the long-range upwardly mobile attempt to re-find belonging may be linked to others reasons as well. Much of the research tied to the dissociation hypothesis is under the powerful influence of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose theoretical framework tends to leave little room for people's own agency and intentionality beyond strategic motives (cf. Caillé, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Sayer, 2005). Ana's efforts, decisions, and actions to re-find belonging thus risk being neglected.

Both Ana's trying quest for belonging and the lasting impacts of her class dislocation, I argue throughout this research, deserve our serious attention. If 'grasping the singular necessarily requires an understanding of the general' (Lahire, 1999, p. 44), this also entails preserving the specificity of personal testimonies—without subsuming them to an overarching sociological narrative.³ This means taking seriously how the long-range upwardly mobile make sense to their own trajectories and negotiate their sense of themselves with respect to both their ties of origin and destination. In other words, this approach requires reconnecting what C. W. Mills (1959, p. 14) famously called the 'personal troubles' of biography to the 'public issues' of history and society. But to do this, we first need to identify the specific

² For a few notable exceptions, see Naudet (2018[2012]) and Pasquali (2014).

³ Significantly, compared with much of his previous work (e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1980, 1984[1979]), this is precisely what Bourdieu (1993a) achieves in *La Misère du Monde*—a book acting as a massive indictment of the dire social consequences tied to the adoption of neoliberal policies in France since the mid-1980s. Here Bourdieu and his associates recognise people's agency and intentionality, even if their lives are mostly characterised by suffering and loss (for more on Bourdieu's theoretical approach to social class and mobility, see Chapter 2).

framework of inequality and normative commitments in which the experience of long-range upward mobility is embedded; to place Ana's experience—as I now go on to do—as part of the wider 'success story' underpinning contemporary Chilean society.

Upward Mobility and Chile's Success Story: the Exemplary Case

In Chile, as in most Western nations, social mobility strikes at the very heart of debates over what makes a good and just social order (e.g., Engel and Navia, 2006; Peña, 2020; Santa Cruz, 2017; Sapelli, 2016). As the defining characteristic of an efficient allocation of resources and a fair meritocratic order, mobility is held as a key ideal for both thriving economies and inclusive societies (e.g., Arrow *et al.*, 2000; Mitnik *et al.*, 2013; Torche, 2015). As such, it crucially relates to questions about (re)distribution (who gets what) and how this changes (or not) across generations. But these issues also raise momentous questions, though often less talked about, concerning recognition, inclusion, and voice. Debates about mobility thus touch a fundamental nerve in the legitimacy of contemporary societies.

Yet in the Chilean case, questions about social mobility are also tied to the specific development pathway the country has taken in recent decades. Indeed, Chile's development trajectory has acquired a vigorous international symbolism, notwithstanding its relatively small size and distance from the centres of global power. In shifting from a unique experiment of democratic socialism to a dictatorship spearheading neoliberal⁴ restructuring, Chilean society has been a true laboratory for social change. Throughout this period, Chile became the first nation to implement pioneering, radical, and systematic neoliberal policies—

⁴ I am well aware that the terms neoliberal or neoliberalism are highly loose and contested notions, all too often used in a seamless way to address grand changes in the governance and configuration of Western societies from the early 1980s onwards. In Chapter 3, when discussing the specific historical background of Chilean society, I offer a more precise delimitation for what I understand is neoliberalism in the Chilean context.

anticipating large-scale economic and institutional developments later applied across the globe (Fourcade and Babb, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Valdés, 2020[1995]). These deep and vast transformations in the way society has been understood and promoted—a ‘market society’ (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001)—relate to contemporary issues of class inequality and social mobility with widespread implications.

Significantly, these same developments underpin Chile’s so-called ‘success story’ as an exemplary case of progress in the Global South. What are the key modernising forces behind Chile’s ‘success story’ in recent decades? Economically, Chile has been characterised by an outstanding economic expansion and remarkable decrease in poverty (Ffrench-Davis, 2017).⁵ Occupationally, the nation reshaped its social structure with a sustained decline in manual and agricultural jobs and growth in non-manual occupations linked to the rise of a service economy (Atria, 2008; León and Martínez, 2001; Ruiz and Boccardo, 2015). Educationally, in just over three decades, the country undertook a swift massification of higher education, reaching the ‘universalisation stage’ typically associated with advanced societies in the Global North (Brunner and Ganga, 2016; Salazar and Leihy, 2017; UNESCO, 2021).⁶ In light of these trends, many observers have considered Chile to be the Latin American land of meritocracy and upward mobility (Santa Cruz, 2017; Sapelli, 2016; World Bank, 2013).⁷

⁵ Since the 1990s until 2010, Chile’s economy has shown average growth of approximately 5 percent per year (OECD, 2016; World Bank, 2016). In the same period, poverty declined from 40 percent in 1990 to less than 10 percent in 2015) (Ffrench-Davis, 2018; UNDP, 2017).

⁶ In 1970, the gross rate of enrolment in higher education was 8.4 percent in Chile. In the following decades this rate grew to 12.4 percent in 1980, 20 percent in 1990, 35.4 percent in 2000, 67.9 percent in 2010, and a staggering 90.9 percent in 2018. The most recent Chilean figure is extraordinary considering that, in the same year (2018), nations like Britain reached 61 percent, Germany 70 percent, and Finland 90.3 percent (UNESCO, 2021).

⁷ As a result of these large-scale transformations, the vast majority of Chilean households have experienced some type of upward mobility (Torche and Wormald, 2004); and, significantly, around 75 percent of the population consider themselves to be part of the new middle classes (Castillo *et al.*, 2013).

These ample structural transformations have also been associated with the enlargement and consolidation of meritocratic values among the wider population. In this new cultural landscape, values such as self-reliance, hard work, and discipline have attained growing prominence regarding opportunities for upward mobility and work achievements (ETE, 2008; ELSOC, 2016-2018; Landerretche and Lillo, 2011). For many analysts, under the rise of individualisation as a dominant pattern (e.g., UNDP, 1998, 2002), a vision in which the fruit of success relies primarily on oneself goes hand in hand with a view of meritocracy embedded in a liberalised market, or a neoliberal conception of the social order (Mac-Clure *et al.*, 2015; Guzmán *et al.*, 2017). Others, while acknowledging that mobility is increasingly envisaged as an individual achievement, also recognise that this is still conceived on wider family-based forms of support (Castillo, 2016; Fercovic, 2020), rooted in a broader background in which the perception of structural forces has not entirely faded away (Frei *et al.*, 2020).

Nevertheless, despite economic prosperity, educational expansion, and the rise in meritocratic beliefs, Chile remains a highly unequal society. Mirroring analogous developments in much of the world, Chilean inequality is largely characterised by a stark concentration at the very top of the income distribution (Fairfield and Jorrat, 2014; Flores *et al.*, 2019; López *et al.*, 2013; Palma, 2018). Under these conditions, as in much of Latin America, Chile's inequality/mobility association reflects a distinctive *pattern* expressed by short-range high mobility in the bottom and middle of the social structure, co-existing with strong barriers to gain admission to the top professional class (Torche, 2005a, 2014; though for important qualifications, see Espinoza *et al.*, 2013 and Espinoza and Núñez, 2014).

Against this specific backdrop, stratification research has mainly addressed changes in Chile's occupational structure. The bulk of this research measures growing occupational mobility,

debating whether the middle classes have grown, the degree to which they are open to new entrants, and the best way to construct class categories for statistical analysis (Franco *et al.*, 2007; Franco and Leon, 2010; Torche, 2005a; Espinoza *et al.*, 2013; Espinoza and Núñez, 2014; Torche and Calvo, 2013; Pérez-Ahumada and Cifuentes, 2019). Other studies have focused their attention on the identities of social classes, underlining the shifting nature of the working classes (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2015; Guzmán *et al.*, 2017; MacClure and Barozet, 2016; Winn, 2004); the declining traditional and rising new middle classes (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012a, 2012b; MacClure *et al.*, 2015; Méndez, 2008, 2010; Méndez and Gayo, 2019; Stillerman, 2010)⁸; and the evolving configuration of economic elites (Aguilar, 2011; Bowen, 2015; Nazer, 2013; Thumala, 2007, 2013).

Surprisingly enough, however, this wealth of research has left unaddressed processes of upward mobility into the upper echelons of Chilean society. In order to retain legitimacy, modern societies committed to meritocracy—like Chile aspires to be—require the access to elite positions to be somewhat permeable. Yet established elites, while discursively committed to meritocratic mobility, put in practice a range of gatekeeping barriers, often acting as powerful mechanisms of social closure (e.g., Cousin *et al.*, 2018; Kahn, 2011; Korsnes *et al.*, 2017). Although numerous studies in Chile reveal the active operations of such mechanisms—structured around exclusive private schooling (Madrid, 2016; Moya and Hernández, 2014; Zimmerman, 2019a), elite universities (Brunner, 2012; Villalobos *et al.*, 2020), family names (Aguilar, 2011), or matrimonial alliances (Hunneus, 2013)—there is still a striking absence of research addressing the experiential dimensions of these processes in contemporary Chilean society.

⁸ As part of this broader scholarship, recent research has also focused on upward trajectories among Chile's indigenous populations (Sepulveda, 2018) and schoolteachers (Lizama, 2018).

Given its pioneering implementation of radical neoliberal reforms since the mid 1970s, its exemplary trajectory of development in the Global South, and its marked trend towards social closure, Chile represents a particularly interesting case to study the experience of long-range upward social mobility at the upper echelons of society. In tackling this crucial issue, I focus on those who—like Ana and my own grandfather—best represent the embodiment of the meritocratic ideal in the Chilean context: the long-range upwardly mobile individuals coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and reaching high-status occupations—law, medicine, and engineering—after attending Chile’s most selective and prestigious universities: Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. It is this specific type of upward trajectory, and its associated experience, which is at the heart of this doctoral dissertation.

Based on extensive qualitative research (including in-depth interviews and participant observation), I address the experience of long-range upward mobility by asking the main following questions: How are the long-range upwardly mobile shaped by the main institutional channels (family, education, high-status occupations) underpinning their upward trajectories? How does this process differ along class and gender lines? How have they navigated both the class dislocation and search for belonging tied to meritocratic success? These questions matter not only to shed new light on the longstanding—but largely unresolved—debate concerning the impacts of mobility on individuals and critically (re)interrogate Chile’s ‘success story’ over the past decades. But, more broadly, these questions—as I now go on to address—also contribute to reorient conventional approaches in the study of social class and mobility within sociology.

Reorienting the Study of Social Mobility: Towards a Cultural and Multigenerational Approach.

Throughout this thesis, I argue for the need to move from the big occupational-based approach advocated by British sociologist John Goldthorpe towards a *cultural* and *multigenerational* perspective on social mobility. Mainstream mobility research looks at the transformation of the class structure and calculates mobility rates across ‘big’ occupational classes. Under the leading influence of Goldthorpe and the so-called Nuffield paradigm (Goldthorpe, 2005, 2007), the study of social mobility has adopted a distinctive quantitative and comparative approach. Focusing on occupation as the key variable to define social class and using representative national surveys, this approach has been highly effective to track intergenerational mobility patterns within and across nations (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Hout and DiPrete, 2006; Torche, 2015).

Although still highly influential, the Nuffield paradigm has been challenged in a number of key areas. By defining class solely in occupational terms, Goldthorpe overlooks how culture shapes both class and mobility—the very dimensions which are often most salient to people (e.g., Lamont, 1992, 2000; Savage, 2000). Moreover, Goldthorpe’s main focus on formal employment to understand class mobility neglects the role of women in stratification and mobility dynamics—a shortcoming which remains largely unjustified (Beller, 2009; Lawler, 1999a; Skeggs, 1997b). Finally, in times of escalating inequalities, Goldthorpe’s large occupational categories struggle to capture fine-grained phenomena of class reproduction at the upper echelons of society and how this may hinder processes of upward mobility at the top (Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

In a parallel process, the field of mobility studies has been reinvigorated by the pluralisation of its analytical concerns and conceptual tools. Two key contributions have emerged from cultural sociology. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's (1984[1979]) well-known conceptual triad—*cultural capital*, *habitus*, and *fields*—a growing stream of scholarship addresses social class and mobility as a process rather than as a variable and underscores the persistence of inequality across generations (e.g., Lareau, 2011[2003], 2015; Lawler and Payne, 2017). A second contribution, encouraged by the comparative work of Michèle Lamont (Lamont and Thévenot, 2001) and put forward by Jules Naudet (2011, 2018[2012]), has emphasised how *cultural repertoires* shape the identities of upwardly mobile people differently both within and across national contexts. A third approach, most recently championed by demographer Robert Mare (2011, 2014), has forcefully called for the development of a broad *multigenerational* research agenda on mobility, rather than the conventional two-generation association model.

In this research I partake in this wider sociological conversation. Within this debate, my research approach addresses the experience of long-range upward mobility in Chile 'from the inside out' (Hall and Lamont, 2013, p. 38). This means taking seriously how the upwardly mobile themselves make sense of their own trajectories, as well as paying careful attention to the complex ways in which they negotiate and adjust when shifting from one class to another. In close dialogue with the debates outlined above and my own empirical findings, I acknowledge the crucial significance of concepts such as cultural capital and cultural repertoires, which can be observed through three institutional channels shaping mobility over the long-durée: families, schools, and high-status occupations. In so doing, I also recognise how mobility is not only informed by class, but is also a deeply gendered process.⁹

⁹ Alongside class and gender, an increasing body of research addresses issues of ethnicity and race for mobility analysis. In particular, this research uncovers a 'minority culture of mobility' (Neckerman *et al.*, 1999; see also Rollock *et al.*, 2014 and Shahrokni, 2015). These issues are certainly relevant in Chile and in Latin America more

More specifically, I posit that greater cross-fertilisation between the contributions emerging from cultural sociology with the analytical concerns tied to a broad multigenerational perspective can productively reorient research on mobility. Being the first study advocating for such an approach, I argue that this enlarged view can better serve the study of mobility in societies in the Global South, and not just those in the Global North—where the bulk of the questions on and approaches to mobility research have been developed. As such, this study is as much an attempt to understand the ‘long shadow’ (Lareau, 2015) of class in Chilean society as it is an engagement with contemporary stratification research.

Layout of the Thesis

Throughout this research, my overall argument unfolds in three parts. In Part One, comprising Chapter 2, 3, and 4, I lay out the theoretical, contextual, and methodological debates within which my study is embedded. In Chapter 2, which addresses the main sociological approaches on social class and mobility, I argue for the need to move from the big occupational-based scheme advocated by Goldthorpe towards a *cultural* and *multigenerational* perspective on social mobility. In particular, I recognise the crucial significance of concepts such as cultural capital and cultural repertoires, identify three different institutional channels shaping mobility over the long-durée—family, educational institutions, and high-status occupations—and underscore how mobility is not only informed by class, but is also a deeply gendered process.

broadly (e.g., Sepulveda, 2018). However, although the Chilean population is ethnically diverse (Rothhammer and Llop, 2004), the vast majority self-identify as ‘white’ (Lizcano, 2005). For more on ethnicity and race, see Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3, I address the transformation of Chile's social classes throughout its modern history and how this allows for greater openness or closure at the upper echelons of society. Using the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2, I focus on the principal dynamics of class division and integration at the upper echelons of Chilean society, the role played by key educational institutions, and high-status occupations in this process. Rooted in these longstanding trends, and despite the vast transformations spurred by the shift towards neoliberalism, I uncover persistent social closure at the top, preventing or hindering the inclusion of outsiders via meritocratic mobility.

After positioning the main theoretical debates and contextual features underpinning this research, I present and discuss my methodological strategy in Chapter 4. Recognising that situated experience and standpoints matter for the practice of research, I provide both an account of and reflections on the methodological decisions involved in this study. I present and discuss the whole research process, including considerations about family history and positionality, the definition of the sample, establishing trust and negotiating access, the analytical and interpretative process of my empirical material, the risks and ethical dilemmas involved, and the main limitations of this research.

In Part Two, including Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, I zoom in on the main empirical findings, placing them in the broader Chilean context and analysing them in tandem with the sociological approaches discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5 and 6, I address the relationships that interviewees maintain with their class of origin and the chief dynamics behind their orientation towards school success. Chapter 5 examines the place and value of education among the families of origin of the interviewees. My findings reveal the presence of three cultural repertoires—the enlightened working-class culture, the epic tied to *liceos* (state secondary schools), and a neoliberal framework—shaping a multigenerational family

project towards upward mobility. These cultural frames, emphasising high expectations and commitments for mobility via education, are closely tied to a family organisation oriented towards ensuring the school success of their offspring. Mediated by extended family members, I show how these components define both the content of cultural heritage framing the value of education, as well as its modes of transmission. Significantly, they are translated into practice as a potent *moral duty*, structuring an orientation towards education as collective rather than individual undertaking.

In Chapter 6, I then explore the problematic relationship of being educationally successful and coming from disadvantaged origins among interviewees. I show how this experience has been critically moulded by the new educational landscape shaped by Pinochet's dictatorship in the early 1980s, powerfully restructuring the way in which working-class families relate to schooling. Against this specific backdrop, I characterise the troublesome experience of navigating the educational system for my interviewees as one of *standing out* and *standing alone*. I also ponder the role of gender, different school pathways, and 'cultural guides' (Lareau, 2015) for tempering a difficult, fragile, and uncertain school experience among interviewees.

Moving beyond the ties that interviewees maintain with their class of origin, Chapter 7 and 8 explore how they adjust and navigate their class of destination. Chapter 7 examines how interviewees adjust to Chile's top universities: Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. In these elite institutional settings, I show how interviewees experience class marginality through *combined* and *cumulative* incidents of class stigmatisation and discrimination. Significantly, as I uncover, these incidents are boundary-marking, liminal experiences: they generate a gradual but steady sense of *class dislocation* in terms of their worldviews and aspirations, as well as their own sense of belonging. But I also reveal how class marginality is experienced *varies* depending on the specific academic programme—law,

medicine, and engineering—in which the long-range upwardly mobile are enrolled, their gender, and the different secondary schools they have previously attended.

In Chapter 8, I tackle how the long-range upwardly mobile navigate high-status occupations. I show that the upwardly mobile face persistent class-based barriers in terms of access to competitive employment or career progression in elite jobs. Yet these barriers do not fully account for how the upwardly mobile deal with the tensions and dilemmas arising from their trajectories and involving their professions. In addressing these issues, my findings also highlight how interviewees approach their professions with distinctive practices, dispositions, and orientations. While they certainly adapt to the ‘rules of the game’ (Lareau, 2015) structuring their high-status occupations, they also—drawing both on different cultural repertoires and the responsibility to support their families of origin—accommodate the dominant rules according to their own goals, values, and responsibilities. Importantly, these findings are indicative of the *elective* or *agentive* elements structuring their upward trajectories and informing the ‘supply-side’ of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 194).

In Chapter 9, I examine the specific ways in which interviewees inhabit, negotiate, and give meaning to family relations in their present lives. Interrogating family relations both with the class of origin and destination, my findings suggest a strong attachment and moral obligation with the class of origin in its narrowest definition (family)—expressed in continual financial and other forms of support—but less so for wider or more abstract definitions such the working class. Alongside this close attachment, my findings also show that the dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility engenders manifold tensions with their families of origin. This has implications for the private and intimate lives my informants can forge as adults. The growing distance from their families of origin makes their need to build a shelter of their own in their intimate lives all the more challenging. But in the realm of intimate and marital

relations they also face a powerful and persistent ‘class ceiling’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). This chapter concludes Part Two of this thesis.

Finally, in Part Three, comprised by Chapter 10, I reflect on the main findings of my study and summarise its key theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to the study of social mobility. In particular, I highlight some of the analytical gains made by this study and outline the main challenges ahead, taking stock of unrealised objectives and the potential for future development.

Part One:

**Towards a cultural and
multigenerational approach
to social mobility**

Chapter 2.

From Occupation to Culture: Understanding the Experience of Long-range Upward Mobility over the Long-durée.

Introduction

From the second half of the 20th century until the present, social mobility has become a major research specialism within sociology and one of its main contributions to both the social sciences and public life (Hout and DiPrete, 2004; Goldthorpe, 2000, 2005). For much of this time, under the leading influence of British sociologist John Goldthorpe, the study of social mobility has adopted a distinctive quantitative and comparative perspective. Focusing on occupation as the key variable to define social class and using representative national surveys, this approach has been highly effective to track the association between macro-level factors and intergenerational mobility patterns within and across nations.¹⁰ Indeed,

¹⁰ Although still very powerful internationally, the impact of Goldthorpe's influence has not been seamless across national contexts. In Britain, in the aftermath of David Glass's (1954) *Social Mobility in Britain*, Goldthorpe's work played a central role in the development of sociology as a modern academic discipline (Savage, 2010: Ch. 7 and 8), only recently being challenged by Bourdieu-inspired perspectives (Atkinson, 2015; Savage, 2016a, 2016b). Elsewhere, however, the influence of the Nuffield paradigm has been much less determinant. In the US, mobility research encompasses a significantly wider array of approaches: in addition to Pitirim Sorokin's (1959[1927]) foundational *Social Mobility*, Blau and Duncan's (1967) 'status-attainment' perspective, Anselm Strauss's (1971) ethnographic and contextualist approach, as well as David Grusky's 'micro-class' (Grusky and Sørensen, 1998; Grusky and Weeden, 2001, 2002; Weeden and Grusky, 2005) approach. In France, largely in response to Bourdieu's *œuvre*, a less unified field of mobility research emerged around the work of Raymond Boudon (1973, 1974), but also including Daniel Bertaux's biographical and multi-generational approach (Bertaux, 1974, 1995; Bertaux-Wiame, 1993; Bertaux and Thompson, 1993, 1997). More on all this below.

Goldthorpe's class schema has been applied in almost all regions of the globe, including an increasing number of Latin American societies (Boado and Solis, 2017; Torche, 2014).¹¹

In more recent years, against a backdrop of rising inequalities, the field of mobility studies has been galvanised by the pluralisation of its conceptual tools. Largely influenced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, an increasing body of research tackles cultural dimensions of class division. Using Bourdieu's (1984[1979]) well-known conceptual triad—capitals, habitus, and fields—this approach conceives of class as a process rather than a variable, underscoring the persistence of inequality across generations (e.g., Lawler and Payne, 2017; Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019). Another culturally-inflected approach, led by Jules Naudet (2018[2012]), has emphasised how cultural repertoires shape the identities of upwardly mobile people differently both within and across national contexts. A third approach, most recently championed by demographer Robert Mare (2011, 2014), has called for the development of a multigenerational research agenda on mobility, rather than the conventional two-generation association approach.

Much of this refreshed debate has also provided new insights into the impacts of mobility on individuals.¹² For a long time, Goldthorpe's mainstream approach contributed to the acceptance of what is known as the 'acculturation hypothesis', underlining both the upwardly mobile's search for identification and the psychologically smooth transitions to their new social milieus of destination. Bourdieu's approach, by contrast, has been linked with the 'dissociation hypothesis'—a view emphasising the unsettling nature of upward mobility and

¹¹ Surprisingly enough, despite greater economic disparities in Latin America, Goldthorpe-inspired research suggests that social class fluidity is unexpectedly similar to that occurring in the industrialised world (see Boado and Solis, 2017; Torche, 2014).

¹² This is part of a longstanding and largely unresolved debate within the literature ever since Pitirim Sorokin's (1959[1927]) seminal *Social Mobility* drew attention to the disruptive consequences of mobility on individuals and their interpersonal ties (more on this below).

tioned to enduring forms of social and psychological distress. In light of these two divergent hypotheses, Naudet (2011, 2018[2012]) has contended that the possibility of overcoming the dislocation related to upward mobility is largely contingent on the cultural repertoires available to the upwardly mobile and how these cultural frames are channelled institutionally.

Yet the bulk of this debate has been driven by the national experience of a handful of societies in the Global North—the US, Britain, and France—with highly idiosyncratic stratification systems and class cultures. Revealingly, much less attention has been devoted to the Global South, where class identities are constituted differently from those in the Global North (Alexander, 2010). In Latin America, the sharp contradiction between economic and class mobility notwithstanding, most research has pursued questions and used analytical perspectives developed in the Global North (Torche, 2014, p. 636), often at the cost of glossing over the distinctive traits of Latin American nations. This persistent discrepancy in the study of social mobility in the region means there should be critical assessment of the suitability of applying theoretical approaches in light of the peculiarities of Latin American societies (more on this in Chapter 3 and 4).

In this chapter, I review and discuss the main debates surrounding social mobility. Inspired by the ‘open cognitive style’ encouraged by Albert Hirschman—taking distance from ‘models or paradigms that aim to prove theories rather than understand realities’ (Hirschman, 2014, p. 152)—, I identify the main debates and concepts to be used throughout this thesis. While endorsing the increasing sociological interest in elites and the upper class (Cousin *et al.*, 2018; Korsnes *et al.*, 2017; Savage and Williams, 2008), I argue for the need to move from the big occupational-based approach championed by Goldthorpe towards a *cultural* and *multigenerational* perspective on social mobility. This perspective is applied in subsequent chapters of this research.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I address the mainstream sociological tradition on class mobility articulated by Goldthorpe. Secondly, I review the perspective developed by Bourdieu and pay especial attention to the concept of cultural capital. Thirdly, I introduce and discuss Naudet's approach to social mobility and his notion of cultural repertoires. Fourthly, I assess the multigenerational research agenda on mobility advocated by Mare, calling for greater cross-fertilisation with the key contributions emerging from cultural sociology. Fifthly, I integrate the preceding debates into three institutional channels shaping mobility over the long-durée—family, schools, and high-status occupations. Sixthly, I underscore how mobility is not only informed by class, but it is also deeply gendered process. And finally, I offer some concluding remarks synthesising the main arguments advanced in this chapter.

Mobility across 'Big' Occupations and the Acculturation Hypothesis

Until recently, the prevailing sociological approach to study social mobility has been chiefly fashioned by British sociologist John Goldthorpe. Initially, Goldthorpe's approach to social mobility was largely developed to address changes in the social structure in post-war Britain. In the 1960s, through the *Affluent Worker* project (1968a, 1968b, 1969), Goldthorpe and his associates showed how the working class still endured as a distinctive class, set apart from 'bourgeois' or middle-class values, despite all the improvements in their living standards tied to the economic prosperity of those years. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, Goldthorpe's (1980) *Class Structure and Social Mobility in Modern Britain* became primarily interested in class mobility. This transition was highly significant: it marked a gradual but steady shift from an original interest in 'class formation' (i.e., how people occupying the same class location bond together to become aware of their position) towards a focus on

‘openness’ (i.e., the relative chances that an individual has of reaching a class of destination different from that of their origins).

In developing what later became known as the Nuffield paradigm, Goldthorpe redefined class analysis in terms of people’s ‘employment relations’ (Erikson *et al.*, 1979). Drawing a dividing line between occupations based on a ‘service relationship’ and those under a ‘labour contract’, Goldthorpe identified a ‘service class’ (e.g., professionals, academics, senior managers), those occupying an ‘intermediate’ position (e.g., self-employed, skilled technicians, supervisors), and a waged working-class (e.g., coal miners, factory workers).¹³ This class schema made it possible to track people’s class origin (in terms of their parent’s occupation) with their class destination (in terms of their own occupation), and measure the movement or mobility in between. Using representative national surveys, Goldthorpe (1980, Ch. 2) revealed that although post-war changes in the occupational structure had supported high rates of *absolute* mobility, rates of *relative* mobility remained fundamentally unchanged.¹⁴ Goldthorpe thus concluded that while upward mobility was a widespread phenomenon in Britain throughout the 1970s, greater openness, or social fluidity, continued to be highly restricted.

This pioneering work made Goldthorpe the leading authority on class mobility in Britain and later internationally (Rose and Harrison, 2010). Over past decades, Goldthorpe’s approach

¹³ From this initial differentiation, Goldthorpe identified seven ‘big’ occupational categories: professionals and managers, clerical workers, self-employed, farmers, skilled manual workers, unskilled manual workers, and agricultural labourers (Goldthorpe, 1980: Ch. 2; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992, pp. 35-47).

¹⁴ The distinction between absolute and relative mobility remains crucial for the use of ‘standard mobility tables’. In these tables, the proportion of individuals that remain in the same class as their parents (‘immobile’) and the proportion that move upward or downward indicate *absolute* mobility. By contrast, *relative* mobility, captured by odds ratios, addresses the association between origins and destinations net of structural change and are thus a key pointer of the level of openness in a given society (Goldthorpe, 1980: Ch. 2 and 3; see also Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992, and Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018).

to class mobility proved highly effective to address intergenerational mobility patterns across national contexts. In his book *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies* (1992, co-authored with Robert Erikson), Goldthorpe unveiled a *common pattern* in the association between origins and destinations across national contexts, although the strength of that association varied between societies. This central finding established his quantitative and comparative approach as a benchmark for subsequent analysis and was rapidly extended to almost all regions of the globe (Hout and DiPrete, 2006; Torche, 2015).¹⁵

Goldthorpe's class model remains highly influential today, both nationally and internationally. Significantly, Goldthorpe's analytical approach involved three salient features enduringly shaping how mobility research is conceived and conducted within and across national contexts. Firstly, Goldthorpe's criteria for occupational aggregation consolidated the use of *large* occupational categories for mobility analysis (Rose and Harrison, 2010). Secondly, his approach established the primacy of *intergenerational* mobility, measured by the comparison between parents and children at two fixed points of time, as the benchmark for the 'big debates' on mobility research (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018).¹⁶ Finally, even if Goldthorpe's

¹⁵ Although Goldthorpe's work is essentially concerned with providing a macro-level account of class reproduction and mobility, he also offers some relevant insights to understand people's mobility strategies and the relative significance of the resources shaping them at a micro-level. Adopting a *rational action theory* approach, Goldthorpe (2000) focuses on people's mobility strategies and their 'causal narratives' by distinguishing between strategies 'from above' and those 'from below'. Using strategies from above, families from privileged backgrounds emphasise higher education as a preferential mean to secure their social positions, devoting their wider economic, cultural, and social resources to this pathway. By contrast, strategies from below, typically tied to those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, involve more difficult choices and limited resources—having to decide, for instance, whether to start working to generate income early on or seek higher education instead (Ibid, pp. 238-43). However, according to Goldthorpe, given their nature as 'exclusive goods', *economic* resources play a crucial role in the way different classes shape their mobility strategies, goals, and aspirations. Thus, members from the working classes would tend to see their first priority as to preserve their class position and pursue upward mobility merely as a secondary alternative.

¹⁶ Originally, Goldthorpe (1980, Ch. 5) acknowledged both the limitations of comparing origin and destinations taken only from two points in time and the importance of *intragenerational* processes (i.e., mobility within one's own lifetime). Indeed, he devoted significant attention to measuring mobility at three time points and not just two: for the father's job when the male respondent was 14, for the first job on entering the labour market, and for the job at time of the survey. This allowed him to address analytical issues concerning intragenerational mobility, such as 'occupational maturity' or 'counter-mobility', which he saw as related to a 'complex series of work-life movements' (1980, p. 125). However, this richer temporal approach has largely waned in more recent decades (see Friedman and Savage, 2017).

class schema was originally developed for *industrial societies*, his approach to class mobility has been applied—often unwarrantedly so—to national contexts without much presence of an industrial working-class or with a less formally employed labour force (Alexander, 2010).¹⁷

Although fundamentally concerned with rates of intergenerational mobility, Goldthorpe's work has also examined the effects of mobility on individuals. Goldthorpe's take on this longstanding sociological debate is closely linked with the so-called 'acculturation hypothesis' originally advanced by Peter Blau (1954). Emerging during the heyday of the decades of post-war prosperity, this hypothesis emphasises both the upwardly mobile's search for identification and the psychologically smooth transitions to their new social milieus of destination. Goldthorpe (1980, Ch. 8) argued that those moving from working-class origins to middle-class occupations were essentially comfortable and proud with the progress they have experienced in their lives. Goldthorpe (1980, pp. 331, 339-40) further pointing out that these individuals were forging cross-class ties, both blurring the lines of traditional status orders and showing important signs of conformity with the existing order.¹⁸ Goldthorpe thus provided a largely positive and unproblematic account of the experience of upward mobility.¹⁹

¹⁷ Importantly, unlike competing approaches (e.g., Grusky and Hauser, 1984), Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) maintained that cross-national differences are fundamentally idiosyncratic. Accordingly, class mobility should be studied in terms of each nation's unique history and institutions. I retain this key idea throughout this thesis.

¹⁸ These findings echo the 'over-conformity hypothesis' advanced by sociologists in the US (e.g., Lipset and Zetterberg, 1959; Hopkins, 1973). This hypothesis suggests that the upwardly mobile tend to override compliance in order to be better integrated into their new group. This view resonates with the findings reported by Jackson and Marsden (1962) in Britain, as they found a great deal of accommodation and conformity among the upwardly mobile. More recently, however, Goldthorpe and Chan (2007) developed 'the status anxiety hypothesis', which suggests that the upwardly mobile are likely to be insecure about their newly acquired status, and therefore shun the taste culture of their socialisation in order to embrace newly obtained 'highbrow' tastes.

¹⁹ This view has found support in research conducted in 10 industrialised nations, indicating that the upwardly mobile are no more likely to be systematically satisfied or dissatisfied than the socially immobile or the downwardly mobile (Marshall and Firth, 1999). Others have found that social mobility by itself—either an upward or downward trajectory—has no significant impact on people's health (Prägs and Richards, 2019).

Nevertheless, for all its influence in shaping how we understand class mobility and its accompanying experience, Goldthorpe's approach has been challenged in a number of key areas. Firstly, by defining class solely in occupational terms, Goldthorpe overlooks how culture informs both class and mobility. However, a large body of research consistently shows the mismatch between 'objective' class positions and 'subjective' forms of class identification (Attias-Donfut and Wolff, 2001; Duru-Bellat and Kieffer, 2006; Savage, 2007).²⁰ Significantly, for many, especially in Britain, this mismatch between objective and subjective mobility is amply explained by the *cultural* pull of working class origins (e.g., Ingram, 2011; Friedman, 2016; Lawler, 1999a, 1999b).

Secondly, because it focuses on formal employment as the key measure of class, Goldthorpe's model overlooks the role of women, the unemployed, and those in informal work for mobility analysis. The neglect of women remains largely unjustified, both because they play a key role in stratification dynamics (Beller, 2009) and their experience of mobility is highly distinctive (e.g., Lawler, 1999a, 1999b; Reay 1997; Skeggs, 1997b; more on this below). Similarly unwarranted is the disregard of people who are unemployed, retired, or disabled. Finally, and particularly significant for the Chilean case, Goldthorpe's framework is less useful in Latin American societies, where a substantial proportion of the population works in informal employment (more on this in Chapter 4 and 5).

Thirdly, Goldthorpe's 'big' occupational approach struggles to capture dynamics of class reproduction in the upper echelons of society. Against a backdrop of rising wealth concentration at the top (e.g., Piketty, 2014), Goldthorpe's criteria for occupational aggregation glosses over substantial assets anchoring the intergenerational persistence of

²⁰ For the French case, Marie Duru-Bellat and Annick Kieffer (2006) estimate that the congruence between 'objective' mobility and 'subjective' mobility is less than 50 percent (see Merli , 2006, however).

advantage at the apex of society. Yet many have argued that mobility analysis needs a ‘micro-class’ approach capable of registering class destinations more effectively (e.g., Weeden and Grusky, 2005, 2012). Building from this idea, fresh research has uncovered how social class systematically moulds the way people get *on*—and not just get *in*—in different elite professions (Friedman and Laurison, 2019; more on this below).

Cultural capital, Habitus, Fields, and the Dissociation Hypothesis

The work of Pierre Bourdieu has brought culture into the centre of inequality studies. Although Bourdieu himself did not study social mobility systematically²¹, he offered a well-known set of conceptual tools to address both class reproduction and change: the key concept of *cultural capital* to account for inequalities in the domain of education and culture; the notion of *habitus*, addressing both the embedded and embodied dispositions individuals use to perceive and act in the social space; and the idea of *fields*, delimiting institutional arenas of occupational or cultural competition (e.g., education, arts, science). Allowing class to be studied as a process rather than a variable, these concepts were successively applied to assess the French educational system in the 1960s and 1970s. In the main thrust of this research—*Les Héritiers* (1964), *La Reproduction* (1970), *La Noblesse d’État* (1989)—Bourdieu asked what had changed in an educational system opening its doors to those who were previously excluded. Despite increasing educational opportunities, Bourdieu showed how the offspring of the established elites still retained and reproduced systematic advantages.

²¹ Bourdieu’s reflections on social mobility are scattered throughout his work. He provides a few remarks in *La Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970, p. 83, 104n7, 157), *La Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984[1979], p. 114, 339 ff), *La Noblesse d’État* (Bourdieu 1989, pp. 144, 147-8), *Leçon sur la Leçon* (Bourdieu 1982), *La Misère du Monde* (Bourdieu, 1993b) and—above all—in his *Esquisse pour une Auto-Analyse* (Bourdieu, 2004[2002]). More on this below.

What explains the continuities in the way privilege is accumulated and passed on amid growing educational opportunities? For Bourdieu, ‘capitals’ play a central role in his understanding of dynamics of inheritance and accumulation behind the reproduction of privilege. In his major work, *La Distinction* (1984[1979]), Bourdieu argued that the availability of cultural, economic, and social resources—functioning like capitals—can both ease or hinder social advancement.²² Accordingly, key to understanding people’s positions in the social space is the volume, composition, and the ‘trajectory’ over time of the resources at their disposal (ibid, p. 114). This broad resource-based notion of trajectory defines Bourdieu’s specific understanding of social mobility. Unlike Goldthorpe’s approach to mobility, looking at just one set of occupational categories, Bourdieu offers a multidimensional account of origins and destinations, though one giving particular prominence to cultural capital.²³ Significantly, this perspective allows the transmission of (dis)advantages both across generations (*inter*-generational mobility) and over one’s own lifetime (*intra*-generational mobility) to be tackled simultaneously.

Yet the mere availability of capitals does not provide the full explanation for the persistence of class privilege. Capitals held by individuals are also linked to the correspondence, or the lack thereof, between their *dispositions* (habitus) and the *institutional arenas* in which they are

²² Capitals include four analytically distinct type of resources: *cultural*, which can be manifested in embodied dispositions (or habitus), in an objectified form (i.e., cultural goods), and an institutionalised state (i.e., educational credentials); *economic*, encompassing income, wealth and financial assets; *social*, including networks, connections, and group memberships; and *symbolic*, which refer to the forms the previous capitals adopt when perceived and recognised as legitimate in specific fields (Bourdieu, 1986a).

²³ The central notion of cultural capital, initially understood as a ‘good’ (e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964), was later considered more broadly as a ‘symbolic mastery’ instilled, channelled, and rewarded through the educational system (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu’s understanding of cultural capital meant mapping various types of cultural practices and relating them to other resources, chiefly to occupation and income. Subsequent conceptual refinements have underlined how specific high-status cultural signals (e.g., preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods, and credentials) can be used either for cultural exclusion (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 156; see also Lareau and Weininger, 2003) or leveraged for social advancement (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978, p.154).

embedded (fields).²⁴ The closer the correspondence between the habitus and the field—as tends to happen with students from privileged backgrounds at elite schools—the greater the chances that the practical, interactive, and corporeal skills of their habitus can thrive within the rules and expectations of that field. Conversely, the lower correspondence that exists between the habitus and the field—as occurs with students from disadvantaged backgrounds at elite institutions—the less these individuals are able to be and/or feel at ease with the logics or demands of those settings (Bourdieu, 1989). In this case, in a process often called ‘hysteresis’ or ‘Don Quixote’ effects (Bourdieu, 1984[1979], p. 101, 109), multiple tensions or uncertainties between people’s ‘objective chances’ and ‘subjective expectations’, regarding both educational and occupational opportunities, may emerge and endure over time. Again, unlike Goldthorpe’s static class schema, it is this changing character of social mobility which Bourdieu emphasises through the dynamic interplay of capitals, habitus, and fields (Friedman and Savage, 2017, pp. 74-8).

In addition to acknowledging the fluid relationship between structure and agency, Bourdieu is also highly sensitive to power and domination. Mobility unfolds in a ‘*socially ranked geographical space*’ structured around a ‘field of power’ (Bourdieu, 1984[1979], p. 124; 1989; italics in the original). The established elites, having preferential access to the resources that are institutionally recognised and valued at the *grandes écoles*—France’s elite universities—define what constitutes legitimate and cherished values and practices. Importantly, although these values and practices are accessible only to a small group, they serve as a reference model for the wider population. Yet for those coming from less privileged backgrounds, Bourdieu

²⁴ Indeed, it is the role of these different forms of capital and their relative significance to one another in the strategies of different actors, both collective and individual, that govern what Bourdieu calls the ‘dynamics of fields’ (1984[1979]: Ch. 4). It is within and across these different fields that people’s *habitus* is developed and deployed, functioning as action generating dispositions and schemes of perception based on a tacit anticipation of objective probability shaping each field and attempting to maximise their positions based on the stake most valued in it (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1989, 1997).

argues, this process tends to be ‘misrecognised’, often implicitly accepting the legitimacy of the status and other social rewards enjoyed by the elites (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005[1992]). Being compelled to see one’s life, practices, and values through the lens of the dominant classes is what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic violence’—a phenomenon to which the upwardly mobile who gain admission to elite educational institutions are particularly exposed.²⁵

Building on this rich theoretical framework, Bourdieu provides an alternative account of the *experience* of long-range upward mobility. In contrast to the ‘acculturation hypothesis’ endorsed by Goldthorpe, Bourdieu’s work is linked with the ‘dissociative hypothesis’. Originally hinted at in Émile Durkheim’s *Suicide* (1965[1897]) and later developed by Sorokin (1981[1927]), this hypothesis underlines the disruptive impact of upward mobility, tied to durable forms of social and psychological distress.²⁶ In particular, Bourdieu (2004[2002]) tackles the dislocating experience of those he calls ‘class transfuges’—people, like himself, experiencing a long-range upward trajectory from humble origins into the upper echelons of society—which he sees as another example of a mismatch between their habitus and the

²⁵ Bourdieu underlines ‘*l’adhésion fascinée à l’institution*’ (a ‘fascinated adherence to the institution’) among those from humble origins at *grandes écoles* (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 144; see also Bourdieu, 1974, p. 24). Throughout this study, I acknowledge this. But I also claim that to better understand the adjustment of the long-range upwardly mobile to their new class destinations we need to go beyond the notion of ‘symbolic violence’. To do this, I import the concept of ‘assaults on worth’ (Lamont *et al.*, 2016, pp. 28-29), originally applied in studies of ethno-racial exclusion, to address incidents of class discrimination and stigmatisation the long-range upwardly mobile experience in their interactions with the elites in Chilean society. Unlike ‘symbolic violence’—being compelled to see one’s life and lifestyle through the often degrading lens of the upper classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005[1992])—assaults on worth better grasps the wide range of class mistreatment the upwardly mobile experience in elite settings: being misunderstood, overlooked, underestimated, or stereotyped (more on this in Chapter 7, 8 and 10).

²⁶ The dissociative hypothesis is also embedded in a long strand of inquiry emerging from both sociology and social psychology in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (see e.g., Hopper, 1981; Musgrove, 1963; Stacey, 1967). Expanding this tradition, some scholars have explored the relationship between social mobility and mental illness (Hollingshead *et al.*, 1954), either focusing on schizophrenia (Lystad, 1957; Turner, 1968) or suicide (Breed, 1963; Maris, 1967) – considerations which I leave beyond the scope of this research.

fields they traverse.²⁷ For Bourdieu, this can be a source of both pain and reflexivity, acquiescence and defiance. But when this engenders a stable but contradictory set of dispositions (i.e., ways of seen, being, and acting), it can crystallise into a ‘habitus clivé’—a lingering and aching dispositional cleavage (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 1091; 1997, p. 79; 2004[2002], p. 127, 140).²⁸

However, for all its significance in the study of class and mobility (Skeggs, 1997; Bennett *et al.*, 2009; Atkinson, 2015; Savage *et al.*, 2015), the Bourdieusian framework is not without shortcomings. Firstly, Bourdieu provides a narrow understanding of the working classes, essentially characterising them by their lack of capitals and their ‘culture of the necessary’ (Bourdieu, 1984[1979], Ch. 7). Yet in contrast to this homogenising depiction, many have drawn attention to the *intra-class variation* within the working classes, emphasising that they often have their own cultural norms that are autonomous rather than deferent to dominant groups (e.g., Grignon and Passeron, 1989; Savage, 2000; Skeggs, 2011). I argue that

²⁷ It is highly significant to note how most of the leading theorists of social class and mobility have been upwardly mobile themselves. This is certainly the case of John Goldthorpe and Pitirim Sorokin (for his impressive social ascent from humble and provincial origins in pre-revolutionary czarist Russia to Harvard University in the US, see Johnston, 1995). Like them, Bourdieu offers another striking example of long-range upward mobility. In his *Esquisse pour une Auto-analyse*, Bourdieu examines his own startling upward trajectory from the rural *Béarn*, located in the French Pyrénées, via studies of philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure*, and later—after immersion into sociology in Algeria—developing a startling academic career crowned with his admission to the *Collège de France*—where he occupied the most renowned academic position for a sociologist. Importantly, against the ‘deceptive grandeur of philosophy’ in which Bourdieu ‘could never feel comfortable with’, he chose sociology, considered then in France ‘a pariah discipline’. Throughout his upward trajectory, Bourdieu found a crucial backing and guidance in key figures within the Parisian intellectual scene (e.g., Fernand Braudel, Raymond Aron, Claude Lévi-Strauss). Despite all his success, however, Bourdieu confesses that at the root of his ‘total investment’ in research there was ‘a very cruel unhappiness’, ‘the intimate desolation of a lonely mourning’ fundamentally tied to his class dislocation. Quite tellingly, Bourdieu considered his work as a sociologist as ‘without any doubt a privilege implying in return a duty’ and he accordingly devoted a considerable amount of his time and energies to study his natal *Béarn* (Bourdieu, 2004 [2002], p. 52, 58, 59, 91, 93; my own translation).

²⁸ The controversial concept of habitus has been subjected to much discussion. Bourdieu (1984[1979]) emphasised a rather homogenous formation of the dispositional structure of the habitus, though he also admitted changes over time, whether by past experiences which are modified by present ones (Bourdieu, 1997) or by conscious and deliberate efforts to change (Bourdieu, 2004[2002]). Recent scholarship has underlined the ethical components of the habitus (Sayer, 2005), its ‘multi-layered’ (Lahire, 1998) or ‘inter-subjective’ (Bottero, 2010) formation, or how its disruption does not always or necessarily lead to a ‘habitus clivé’ (Friedman, 2016; Pasquali, 2014).

acknowledging this greater depth and breadth of working-class culture, especially by paying greater analytical attention to the ‘different constituencies’ (Reay, 1997) or ‘strata’ (Schwartz, 2012[1990]) among the working classes, is particularly relevant for the study of social mobility (see Chapter 5, 8, and 9).²⁹

Secondly, and very much relatedly, Bourdieu’s accrual-acquisition resource model is weakened by his poor understanding of working-class culture. The underlying logic of this framework—all individuals seeking to increase their overall value through the acquisition, conversion, and accrual of economic, cultural, and social resources prized in specific fields—takes for granted that the upwardly mobile share the same goals and/or values as those from privileged backgrounds. However, if this is not entirely the case, as I show in Chapter 8, it is important to reconsider the relationship between habitus and fields in order to understand how the upwardly mobile actualise different goals and values from those dominant in their occupational fields.

Finally, the notion of ‘habitus clivé’ does not always provide an accurate account of the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility and its accompanying experience. Indeed, contrary to what Bourdieu tended to underline, a growing stream of scholarship suggests that there is no a mechanical link between upward mobility and a durable dispositional cleavage. In addition to the role of gender and ethnicity (more on this below), recent research indicates that there are a variety of experiences tied to upward mobility depending on people’s specific trajectories in the social space (Friedman, 2016; Pasquali, 2014), the type of educational institutions they navigate prior to entering higher education (Jack, 2014, 2019),

²⁹ In some of his late work, however, Bourdieu (e.g., 1987, 1989) acknowledged greater internal heterogeneity of class fractions, depicted as clusters or ‘clouds’ of individuals at once different and similar enough in terms of key properties. But these remarks remained as broad indications without direct application for mobility analysis.

and the particular occupational pathways they have pursued (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). These considerations occupy an important place throughout this thesis.

Cultural Repertoires and their Role in Solving the Tensions of Upward Mobility

Over the past decade, an alternative cultural perspective of social mobility has emerged. In *Entrer dans l'Élite: Parcours de Réussite en France, aux États-Unis et en Inde*, Jules Naudet (2018[2012]) analyses the experience of upward mobility into elite professions in three nations with distinct stratification patterns: a society still marked by the weight of class and status inherited from the aristocratic *ancien régime* (France), a supposedly open society based on merit and individual ability alone (US), and a closed society sustained by a caste system (India). Unlike Goldthorpe's chief attention to class mobility defined in purely occupational terms, or Bourdieu's primary interest in the cultural forms of class division, Naudet is principally concerned with the *variation* in the experience of mobility across national contexts. It is the narratives of this experience, and the wider cultural resources supporting it, that are at the centre of his approach to social mobility.

Naudet reframes the analysis of the experience of long-range upward mobility. His starting point is to consider the experience of upward mobility as implying an unavoidable tension between the class of origin and the class of destination. This tension is shaped by a 'sociological' force, usually entailing a double or contradictory socialisation between ties of origin and destination. But, significantly, there is also a 'moral' tension, concerning the upwardly mobile's allegiances towards their original backgrounds and their current social

locations—an aspect mostly absent in the Bourdieusian framework.³⁰ According to Naudet, this double tension goes hand in hand with the need to reduce the conflict between highly dissimilar social and cultural milieus: exposed by their upward trajectories to opposing socialisation practices and moral commitments, the upwardly mobile are confronted with the challenge of building a consistent narrative of their self and place in the social space.

For Naudet, facing this challenge can engender three analytically distinct ‘stances’ among the upwardly mobile: a legitimist, loyalist, and a reflexive stance. Usually linked with those from right-wing political or religious backgrounds, a *legitimist* stance tends both to acknowledge established social hierarchies and give individual merit a central place in mobility narratives (Naudet, 2018[2012], p. 17).³¹ At the opposite pole, a *loyalist* stance is vindicated by those tied to families rooted in the working-class movement with left-leaning political penchants, expressing their willingness to remain attached to the values or norms governing their class of origin, thus avoiding the feeling of having ‘betrayed’ their roots (ibid, p. 18).³² As an intermediate position, the *reflexive* stance consists of an attempt to narrate the mobility experience which elides the choice between a legitimist or loyalist attitude, acknowledging the place of ambiguity or uncertainty also tied to upward mobility (ibid, p. 22-3).³³ In tackling

³⁰ As Andrew Sayer argues in *The Moral Significance of Class* (2005; see also 2009), the Bourdieusian framework lacks the ability to address people’s normative orientations and commitments. It thus neglects both the moral dimension of people’s experience of inequalities and how this affects the way people value one another and themselves.

³¹ This the attitude that Bourdieu (1989, pp. 147-8) emphasised in his work on the long-range upwardly mobile in France.

³² This stance is also rendered as a ‘stance of attachment to the background of origin’. To simplify, throughout this research, I just refer to it as the ‘loyalist’ stance. In many respects, this is the outlook famously taken by figures like Richard Hoggart in Britain (1989, 2009 [1957]).

³³ Naudet makes it clear, however, that the reflexive stance cannot be considered a form of ‘self-objectivation’, which is precisely the one Bourdieu (2004[2002]) claimed to be part of the self-analysis of his own upward trajectory.

the cultural variability underpinning people's orientation to upward mobility, these three stances—legitimist, loyalist, reflexive—occupy a prominent place throughout this research.

Drawing upon these analytical tools, Naudet expands our understanding of how culture shapes mobility beyond Bourdieu's key notion of cultural capital. Inspired by the work of Michèle Lamont (1992, 2000; Lamont and Thévenot, 2000), Naudet argues that *cultural repertoires* are a crucial concept to understand the experience of upward mobility across national contexts. Unlike the concept of cultural capital, emphasising how certain cultural assets and practices yield (dis)advantages in specific institutional settings (Lamont and Lareau, 1988; DiMaggio and Useem, 1978; Friedman and Laurison, 2019), cultural repertoires can be understood as a set of frames available to individuals (e.g., shared narratives, ideologies, or even myths) to make sense of the reality they experience. As such, Naudet argues, cultural repertoires constitute key resources with which the upwardly mobile confront the tensions tied to their trajectories in the social space. Significantly, based on this understanding of cultural repertoires, Naudet claims to be able to reconcile the divergent findings of the 'dissociative' and 'acculturation' hypothesis still informing much of the debate on the effects of mobility on individuals (Naudet, 2011, 2018[2012]).

Naudet's comparative research shows that cultural repertoires structure the identities of socially mobile individuals reaching elite occupations across national contexts differently. In the US, for instance, the upwardly mobile emphasise a persistent anchoring of the 'American Dream' across generations. Despite the existence of deep inequalities, this is based on the taken-for-granted beneficial role of social competition, the belief in the permeability of class boundaries, and the reward of asceticism or loyalty to family values as a durable way to remain

‘grounded’ or ‘rooted’ (Naudet, 2018[2012]: Ch. 4).³⁴ As a widespread cultural frame, defining the core identity of the nation, the American Dream allows the upwardly mobile to build a consistent life narrative in a way which is absent in a France still pervaded by strong cultural hierarchies, or an India enduringly riven by a caste system (Naudet, 2018[2012], Ch. 3 and 5).

Cultural repertoires not only operate at the national level but also at a *sub-national* scale. This is the case of the upwardly mobile Dalits—the most stigmatised caste—in India. Characteristically, they provide constant financial aid to their families and support institutions for the promotion of people sharing their stigmatised caste background. They do this, Naudet shows, largely because Dalits see themselves as the representatives, in the advanced positions of Indian society, of a ‘community in struggle’ (Lamont, 2000)—a vision historically rooted in the cultural vindication of the Dalits led by Ambedkar (Naudet, 2018[2012], Ch. 3). Thus, unlike what happens in the US or France, all this shapes an experience of mobility understood mainly as a collective rather than an individual undertaking: upwardly mobile Dalits have powerful cultural resources at their disposal to make sense of their upward trajectories, while retaining a strong solidarity with and loyalist stance towards their caste/class of origin.

To address the relationship between sub-national and national cultural repertoires Naudet coins the concept of ‘instituted ideology’. This notion underlines the ‘degree of congruence of ideologies’ within each nation’s key institutions, such as the family, schools, universities,

³⁴ Nevertheless, these experiences are not uniform, and African American interviewees, for instance, are more distant from the prevailing narrative. Indeed, among this group, upward social mobility is perceived as more fragile, with a racial stigma negatively influencing their chances of success. According to Naudet, this makes African Americans more sceptical of a vision of society in which the weight of social class still deeply shapes people’s life chances.

and work settings. This can ease or intensify the tension tied to long-range upward mobility: the more consistent the prevailing ideology is embedded through these different institutional settings, Naudet suggests, the easier for upwardly mobile individuals is to build a consistent narrative of their trajectory and current position in the social space and vice versa. The concept of ‘instituted ideology’ leads one to think differently about the experience of upward mobility depending on the influence of different cultural, political, and social institutional settings on individual trajectories. In highlighting the multiple intervening or mediating factors shaping the experience of upward mobility, this term thus helps to acknowledge the *variation* underpinning these trajectories. Unlike the homogenising concept of ‘habitus clivé’, this concern for variation in our understanding of the experience of long-range upward mobility is another key element throughout this research (cf. Pasquali, 2014).

Towards a Multigenerational View of Social Mobility

For a long time, as I have already noted, mainstream mobility research has been governed by a two-generation (parent-to-offspring) view of intergenerational transmission. According to Goldthorpe (2005), the standard one-parent one-offspring approach—typically using fathers’ social class to predict the same outcome among their children—remained widely used because it provided a wide base of comparable evidence. Nevertheless, this approach heavily relied on a number of assumptions arising from a handful of nations in the Global North during the middle decades of the 20th century: the dominance of the formal economy over the informal and a model of a nuclear family sustained by a male breadwinner. Such assumptions, however, do not apply anymore to societies where they once prevailed (Palh,

1984; Silva, 2013), nor do they reflect the experience of societies in the Global South (Alexander, 2010).³⁵

In light of these and other considerations, the two-generation paradigm has been persuasively challenged by demographer Robert Mare. In his essay *A Multigenerational View of Inequality*, Mare (2011) shows how the concern with measuring class solely in terms of the relationship between parents and children corresponds to a sociological construct—one which glosses over the very real influence of multiple resources passed on across more than two generations. Mare's starting-point, by contrast, underlines a plain but often overlooked fact: institutional configurations and their influence throughout generations vary across time and space. Accordingly, Mare advocates the development of a broad multigenerational mobility research agenda, encompassing the influence of the extended family, such as non-resident contemporary kin, the study of the role of social institutions in shaping multigenerational processes, and the combined consideration of demographic and mobility dynamics.

In recent years, reacting to Mare's plea for multigenerational mobility research, a growing number of studies have addressed what has become known as the 'grandparents effect' in class/status attainment. Yet the bulk of this literature has so far yielded inconclusive findings: while some studies suggest that including the grandparents effect enhances predictions in the transmission of inequality (e.g., Chan and Boliver, 2013; Hällsten and Pfeffer, 2017; Jæger, 2012), others report that these findings are largely marginal or inexistent (e.g., Anderson *et al.*, 2018; Engzell *et al.*, 2020; Warren and Hauser, 1997). However, in order to discern the

³⁵ Both autobiographical accounts and empirical research question the pervasiveness of the nuclear family model in working-class families. Indeed, Richard Hoggart's (1989) *A Local Habitation* and Albert Camus' (1994) *Le Premier Homme*—two self-portraits of upwardly mobile intellectuals in Britain and in French Algeria, respectively—foreground the potent role played in their childhoods by grandmothers and other extended kin. In a similar vein, in *Family and Kinship in East London*, Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957) uncovered dense networks of kinship and neighbourliness among working-class families and going far beyond the nuclear family model.

effect of variables such class or status over time, much of this research abstracts those variables from kinship, cultural, or institutional dynamics—as though the impact of the former could be gauged separately from the effects of the latter. This important but narrow focus on causal inference falls significantly short of Mare’s (2011, 2014) call for greater pluralism in the use of data sources and methods, including descriptive evidence and accounts.

To address the full breadth of Mare’s multigenerational research agenda, I argue throughout this thesis that it is key to cross-fertilise it with the contributions of cultural sociology to mobility research—an area strikingly ignored by Mare. Already in the 1960s, Bourdieu—himself one of the leading figures in cultural sociology—remarked that we can only really get a grip on people’s current situation in the social space if we know where they, and their forebears, including grandparents, have come from (Bourdieu, 1966, pp. 326-7; see also Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, pp. 96-97). Yet Mare not only overlooks that remark, but the key concept of cultural capital as well—whose significance, however, has been extensively recognised (e.g., Skeggs, 1997; Bennett *et al.*, 2009; Atkinson, 2015; Savage *et al.*, 2015).³⁶ But in addition to the recognition of the concept of cultural capital, as I have maintained thus far, we also need a wider understanding of how culture shapes both class reproduction and processes of meritocratic mobility in the upper echelons of society.

Underpinned both by the notions of cultural capital and cultural repertoires, I make the case for a broad *multigenerational cultural transmission* approach to social class and mobility. The notion of cultural capital, emphasising how certain cultural resources and practices yield

³⁶ Revealingly, Mare (2011, p. 8 n1) discusses the implications of physical, financial, human, social, and occupational capitals for his multigenerational approach to inequality, but only once mentions cultural capital and without dwelling on it.

(dis)advantages in specific educational or occupational settings, is highly relevant to understand both the barriers faced by the upwardly mobile and how their class-inflected identities shape their upward trajectories. But this also requires the concept of cultural repertoires. This notion provides the upwardly mobile with a set of tools (e.g., shared narratives, frames, or scripts) which are essential to make sense of their upward trajectories and the class dislocation typically associated with them. Drawing on the significance of both these concepts, I now turn my attention to three key institutional channels sustaining multigenerational cultural transmission relevant for mobility analysis. This approach, I argue, is key to address the ‘long shadow’ (Lareau, 2015) of class both across multiple generations and over the life-course.

Institutional Channels Sustaining Multigenerational Cultural Transmission: Families, Schools, High-status Occupations.

A well-established body of research recognises that the relationship between origins and destinations is fundamentally mediated or shaped through three main institutional channels: families (e.g., Lareau, 2011; Lareau *et al.*, 2007; Reay *et al.*, 2005), schools (e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, 1970), and occupations (e.g., Heath, 1981; Hout, 1984; Stanworth and Giddens, 1974).³⁷ Within sociology, the role of families is essentially relevant for understanding dynamics of class reproduction across generations, but less so to understand processes of social mobility. Some have suggested that the families of the upwardly mobile often possess ‘hidden resources’ and ‘particular dispositions’ to self-accumulate cultural capital—either because of their slightly higher position in the social space than others within

³⁷ The relationship between origins, education, and destinations has been often formalised under what is known as the ‘OED triangle’ (see Marshall *et al.*, 1997, pp. 70-1; see also Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018, p. 90ff), meant to assess the role of education in the intergenerational transmission of class (dis)advantages.

the working classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Jackson and Marsden, 1962; Pasquali, 2014) or because they are embedded in specific family configurations favouring school success (Lahire, 2012[1995])—opening up slightly different ranges of conceivable futures for their offspring. Others, this time from the perspective of cultural repertoires, have drawn attention to the ‘micro-variations’ between ‘family ideologies’ and ‘family trajectories’ in the making of mobility (Naudet, 2018[2012], pp. 268-9).

This research draws greater attention to the relationship between families and mobility as a cumulative process unfolding over the ‘long-durée’ (Bertaux, 1973, p. 73). As Daniel Bertaux and his associates have noted, that relationship is largely premised on *multigenerational family (hi)stories*, unfolding at the crossroads of family specificities and their relations to both historical continuities and contingencies, and how both, in turn, shape family cultures (Bertaux and Thompson, 1993, 1997).³⁸ Significantly, these complex interconnections between family cultures and history can lead to ‘transmutation’ as a possible strategy of transmission among families (Thompson, 1997, p. 46) and not just reproduction across generations. As such, this wider multigenerational approach to family transmission can prove particularly valuable in better understanding mobility, connected aspirations, and strategies. Throughout this research, I look at families through this dual conceptual prism, paying attention to both cultural capital and cultural repertoires.

³⁸ Indeed, to understand the workings of multigenerational mobility, Bertaux (1995, p. 83, 73) speaks of ‘*champs mémoriel familial*’ (family memory fields) transmitting family culture ‘little by little in everyday practices that often escape consciousness, and with slow motion effects that only become visible after periods measured in years and even decades’. In this, Bertaux and his associates anticipated recent work in social psychology (Fivush *et al.*, 2008; Merrill and Fivush, 2016), similarly emphasising the role of *extended family* histories in the making of an ‘intergenerational self’ within a broader familial, historical, and cultural context. Some have used the idea of the ‘intergenerational self’ to show how people ‘deflect’ their own privilege while conveniently highlighting the meritocratic making of their achievements (Friedman *et al.*, 2021).

A second institutional channel of multigenerational cultural transmission relates to educational institutions. Schools have long been understood for the crucial role they play in cultural transmission across generations.³⁹ But schools also sit within a broader educational field, with dominant and dominated institutions, each characterised by an idiosyncratic cultural ethos (Bourdieu, 1989). Elite schools, Bourdieu further observed, are endowed with distinctive socialisation processes—often crystallising in what he termed ‘*esprit de corps*’—which can both solidify group boundaries and accumulate advantages over time. Building from this, recent research uncovers how elite schools cultivate and reproduce privilege as a form of being at ease (Kahn, 2011), or as ‘natural’ path for personal development (Quaresma, 2011). Others have also shown the impact different schools have for the adjustment to elite universities among the upwardly mobile. Anthony Jack (2014, 2019) thus differentiates the ‘privileged poor’, whose experiences at prestigious and competitive private schools have primed them for both academic success and elite behaviour, who outperform their ‘doubly disadvantaged’ counterparts, who have been deprived of any such advantages in the low-status and underfunded state schools they have previously attended.

What this body of research points to is the need for a more granular understanding of the role played by different schools in social mobility. Although not always clearly put forward, this research thus invites us to draw greater attention to hierarchies shaping the educational field and specific role certain educational institutions play for mobility. In this respect, it is important to note that most educational institutions are characterised by their durability over time: they transcend the individual lives of their students and graduates. It is by this durability that some educational institutions—typically elites ones—cement their multigenerational influence, one that is transmitted both by the specific type of cultural capital they transmit to

³⁹ Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) famously argued that the *raison d'être* of the school system is to inculcate, channel, and reward cultural capital and its symbolic insignia.

their graduates and the distinctive cultural ethos and self-conception they instil in them—often acting as potent cultural repertoires.⁴⁰ These features, I argue throughout this research, are highly significant in both the reproduction of privilege and in the creation of opportunities for upward mobility (see Chapter 3, 6, and 7).

A final institutional channel of multigenerational cultural transmission concerns high-status occupations. Sociology has a rich history distinguishing between elite professions—those guaranteeing cultural recognition, social networks, and future economic security—and less prestigious occupations (Heath, 1981; Hout, 1984; Lipset and Bendix, 1991; Stanworth and Giddens, 1974). However, against a current backdrop characterised by a heightened credentialised differentiation in the labour market, scholars have called for greater attention to the specific role certain elite professional organisations—rather than just discrete occupational groups—play in the exclusion of outsiders (e.g., Ashley and Empson, 2016). In this vein, recent research has uncovered how those from disadvantaged backgrounds reaching elite professions tend to specialise in less well-paid areas (Ashley *et al.*, 2015), are more inhibited to ask for pay raises or rely less on networks to leverage job opportunities (Macmillan *et al.*, 2014), or ‘self-eliminate’ themselves from seeking advancement because of worries about ‘fitting in’ (Friedman, 2016; Friedman and Laurison, 2019). These and another potent ‘drivers’ (e.g., the economic security transmitted by family-based resources, sponsored mobility premised on class-cultural homophily, class-based behaviour misrecognised yet rewarded as ‘talent’) give shape to a sturdy ‘class ceiling’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2019) favouring the already privileged and preventing the upwardly mobile from reaching top positions in high-status occupations and in specific elite organisations.

⁴⁰ Some scholars have promoted an understanding of the ethos, structure, and self-conception associated with different educational institutions as an ‘organizational’ (McDonough, 1997) or ‘institutional’ (Ingram, 2009; Reay *et al.*, 2001, 2009, 2010) habitus. For a compelling critique of these perspectives, see Atkinson (2011).

This research draws greater attention to the more fine-grained forms of social closure at work within elite professions. Friedman and Laurison (2019) invite us to look at specific culture and hierarchy between and within high-status occupations, noting that variation in the class ceiling is largely contingent on the specific type of cultural capital—‘embodied’ versus ‘technical’ forms of cultural capital—valued and rewarded in specific elite professions.⁴¹ In Britain, for instance, this would be behind a wider divide between higher professionals and managers: higher managers and technicians may earn more, but traditional or ‘gentlemanly’ (Miles and Savage, 2012) professions—such as law or medicine—remain considerably more elitist in terms of restricting both access and career progression for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). It is this internal hierarchy within and between elite professions, and in connection with wider cultural resources, which matters for a deeper understanding of how the upwardly mobile adjust and navigate the upper echelons of society. Accordingly, this greater granular attention to the internal differences in elite professions, but also the cultural repertoires that the upwardly mobile bring with them into their high-status occupations, feature prominently in this research (Chapters 3, 7, and 8).

Mobility as a Gendered Process

The long and multifaceted influence of social class is not the only factor underpinning mobility, however. A large body of research suggests that mobility is a deeply gendered

⁴¹ Friedman and Laurison (2019: Ch.10) observe that, in Britain, occupations like television rely heavily on ‘embodied’ cultural capital. In these occupations, those from disadvantaged backgrounds not only bear a substantial class pay gap, but experience a persistent lack of fit and confidence, and tend to avoid ambitious careers. In more technical professions such as architecture, by contrast, fitting in and confidence matter less and deploying concrete technical competence counts for more: class origins make less difference to pay, and those from lower origins feel more comfortable and are less likely to avoid ambitious career.

process (e.g., Abbott and Sapsford, 1987; Beller, 2009; Lawler, 1999; Pasquali, 2014; Skeggs, 1997; Sorensen, 1994). In particular, in contrast with the view of mobility based on the static categories of men's productive labour (e.g., Goldthorpe, 1983), this research highlights the force with which gender norms differently affect both women's life chances and lived-experiences.

This scholarship foregrounds the role of gender for mobility analysis in a number of key areas. Some research indicates that trends in two-generational mobility vary depending on whether they are estimated solely on the status of fathers or that of both parents (Beller, 2009). Others show how upwardly mobile women, unlike their male counterparts, experience mobility as defying gendered expectations confining them to domestic duties or challenging their legitimacy as beings less worthy of recognition (Lawler, 1999a; Pasquali, 2014; Skeggs, 1997b; Reed-Danahay, 2002).⁴² Finally, others note that women from working-class backgrounds face a double wage penalty in elite occupations (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). All of these analyses powerfully suggest that the ways in which cultural capital is valued and rewarded for mobility is inextricably linked to the gender of their holders (cf. Bourdieu, 1998).

But gender disparities do not matter solely in terms of cultural capital. Women are not only central agents in managing and maintaining family emotions and interpersonal relations (Hochschild, 1990; see also Bourdieu, 1998, p. 68 and Reay, 2004), they also play a critical role in the development of families' class identification and wider culture (Abbott and Sapsford, 1987; Sorensen, 1994). In this regard, for instance, there is growing evidence

⁴² Others have underlined the specificity of the *male* experience of upward mobility (Reay, 2002; Ingram, 2011). This work has emphasised the considerable emotional, intellectual, and interactive work men from working-class backgrounds must produce to combat the mismatch between masculine dispositions engendered in their families and those required for educational and career success.

suggesting that while fathers tend to tell childhood stories of achievement and success, mothers are more likely to tell stories of affiliation (e.g., Buckner and Fivush, 2000; Fiese *et al.*, 1995; Fiese and Skillman, 2000). Women thus play a substantial—though often overlooked—role in shaping cultural repertoires relevant for understanding both class identification and social mobility.

Drawing from this scholarship, throughout this research I provide a systematic comparison between the experience of men and women sharing similar long-range upward trajectories rarely available in the literature.⁴³ In so doing, I use the concepts of cultural capital and cultural repertoires to better understand how gender norms shape long-range upward mobility both across generations and over the life-course.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have addressed the main debates and concepts about social mobility. Considering theoretical frameworks as inseparable from—but not reducible to—the specific national contexts in which they have emerged, I have sought to sketch out the relevant theoretical concepts and hypotheses that my thesis addresses as I move forward. I have recognised that the aforementioned pieces of literature have, to a certain extent, complemented each other in my study and, in so doing, have each been indispensable to my thinking about the experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. Thus, inspired by the ‘open cognitive style’ advocated by Albert Hirschman (2014, p. 152), I have

⁴³ Until now, the bulk of the literature has focused either on men (e.g., Ingram, 2009; Reay, 2002) or women (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Lawer, 1999; Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001), but without making systematic comparisons.

indicated the particular strands of literature reviewed that are important to my study, but also where they may also be limited or expandable.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued for the need to move from the big occupational-based approach championed by Goldthorpe towards a cultural and multigenerational perspective of social mobility. I have recognised the crucial significance of concepts such as cultural capital and cultural repertoires, identified three different institutional channels shaping mobility over the long-durée—family, educational institutions, and high-status occupations—and underscored how mobility is not only informed by class, but is also a deeply gendered process. These theoretical frameworks and analytical issues form the basis of my analysis in the following chapters.

Chapter 3.

Meritocratic Mobility at the Top? Social Closure, Elite Universities, and High-Status Occupations in Chilean Society.

Introduction

Chile, like most of Latin America, has historically been recognised as a nation with low social mobility due to its high levels of inequality. Indeed, the region has been extensively characterised by the world's most extreme levels of inequality (e.g., Mann and Riley, 2007). Structurally rooted in an agrarian-based society, the institutional legacy of the colonial period, and the slow expansion of education (World Bank, 2003: Ch. 5), inequality in Chile has persistently remained elevated throughout the 20th century (Rodríguez-Weber, 2018). This longstanding trend has consolidated the view that social mobility is negatively correlated with high levels of inequality—a general depiction most recently popularised by Miles Corak's (2016) 'Great Gatsby curves'.

Surprisingly enough, however, Chile shows an apparent lack of association between inequality and class mobility. Research inspired by Goldthorpe's class schema finds that social fluidity in Chile is comparable to that of the most fluid industrialised nations, in spite of the wider economic disparities in the former (Torche, 2005a; although see Espinoza *et al.*, 2013; Espinoza and Núñez, 2014). Yet the seeming non-existence of association between inequality and class mobility resurfaces once the analytical focus is switched from the *level* to the *pattern* of inequality and mobility: in Chile, as in much of the region, high economic concentration at the top is correlated with a robust intergenerational reproduction of the top

professional class (Torche, 2014, p. 636; see also Zimmerman, 2019a). In line with recent sociological interest in elites and the upper class (e.g., Cousin *et al.*, 2018; Korsnes *et al.*, 2017; Savage and Williams, 2008), the strong barriers to access the top professional class in Chile suggest the need for much greater attention to processes of mobility into elite groups.

However, research tackling these issues is marked by a signal impasse. While a well-established historiographical scholarship highlights that the traditional Chilean elite is highly cohesive, endogamous, and oligarchic (e.g., Bauer, 1975; Correa Sutil, 2004; Góngora, 1971, 1975; Jocelyn-Holt, 2014[1992], 2008; Stabili, 1996; Zeitlin and Ratcliff, 1988), a long stream of sociological research on social mobility (e.g., Espinoza and Núñez, 2014; Hamuy, 1961; León and Martínez, 1984, 2001; Martínez and Tironi, 1985; Raczynski, 1971; Torche, 2005a; Worlmal and Torche, 2004) documents vast structural changes but tends to overlook what occurs at the upper echelons of society.⁴⁴ As a result, there is still little understanding of whether long-range upward mobility has translated into opportunities of social integration in recent decades, or whether this is instead linked with different processes of social closure at the top. What is the nature of openness or closeness at the apex of Chilean society and how has this phenomenon changed over time? What is the role of Chile's most prominent and idiosyncratic educational institutions in the reproduction of class privilege and opening prospects for meritocratic mobility? And what is the select group of professions guaranteeing cultural recognition, social networks, and future economic security?

In this chapter, I address these central questions. Drawing from the historiographical and sociological research identified above and the theoretical ideas outlined in Chapter 2, I offer

⁴⁴ Much of the more recent research on social stratification and mobility in Chile (e.g., Torche, 2005a; Espinoza *et al.*, 2013; Espinoza and Núñez, 2014) is inspired by Goldthorpe's occupational-based approach to social mobility. But, as I noted in Chapter 2, the question remains as to whether criteria for occupational aggregation giving rise to 'big' class categories—Goldthorpe's class schema—glosses over important dynamics of class reproduction at the top.

a general overview of the transformation of Chile's social classes, the role played by key educational institutions, and high-status occupations in the making of the elites. In particular, accompanying the neoliberal shift of the past decades, I uncover a trend towards the privatisation of elite professions. Overall, I argue that despite the intense transformation that Chilean society has undergone in recent decades, there is still a strong tendency towards social closure at the top. These arguments provide the main background for the subsequent analysis of my empirical material in Part II of this thesis.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I address both the main changes and continuities shaping Chile's social classes, devoting special attention to dynamics of closure and openness at the top. Secondly, I focus on the role played by Chile's oldest and most renowned educational institutions in the making of elites, particularly Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Thirdly, I turn my attention to the most prestigious professions—law, medicine, and engineering—emphasising how they relate to processes of class reproduction and meritocratic mobility. Finally, I provide some concluding remarks.

Class Reproduction and Mobility at the Top: a Persistent Social Closure

To understand the making of Chilean elites, their strong tendency to social closure, but also their selective receptiveness of meritocratic mobility, it is important to place its analysis during what Eric Hobsbawm (1987, p. 8) famously termed 'the long nineteenth century'. Beginning with the French Revolution and coming to an end with World War I, this period witnessed the emergence of modern societies: as monarchies and aristocracies crumbled and democracies and capitalists triumphed, the ideological foundations in the making of elites were reshaped. In Europe, and especially in the US, the consolidation of bourgeois society gave rise to elites increasingly based on wealth and individual rights, rather than the

inheritance of titles tied to the adscriptive groupings structuring the *ancien régime*. This momentous historical change was never a straightforward process, and much of the rise of the bourgeoisie was not without lingering aristocratic worries (cf. Mayer, 1981). Yet the shift from *titles* to *money* conveys the central promise of social mobility well: as the threat of decline became a real possibility for the old aristocracies, the potential for social advancement was now open for the middle classes and the poor, however slim their chances really were.

Latin America did not remain unaltered by this fundamental reconceptualisation of social relations. In Chile, as in most of the region, this period was galvanised by Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808, which led to the collapse of the Spanish empire and the Wars of Independence in the new world. The local creole elites, established since the early stages of the Spanish conquest under strict adscriptive criteria, but gradually taking wealth as a legitimate mean for social ascent (Góngora, 1970, 1975; Bauer, 1975), had to assume the role of leading the newly independent nations as ruling classes. Yet they did so in a context increasingly dominated by the ideas of the triumphant bourgeois societies in the Global North. The Chilean elites, neither fully aristocratic nor entirely bourgeois but combining both traits, undertook the challenge of modernising an agrarian society organised around *haciendas* under the banner of enlightened and republican ideas (Jocelyn-Holt, 2014[1992], Ch. 2 and 3; van der Ree, 2007, Ch. 2).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ This process was part of a broader historical phenomenon closely tied to the construction of modern nationalism worldwide. Indeed, Benedict Anderson's celebrated book, *Imagined Communities*, locates the roots of nationalism in Spanish colonial rule of Latin America. Anderson (2006[1983], Ch. 4) shows how the specific interactions among indigenes and European immigrants, between Spanish officials and local creole elites, gradually created some of the main symbols, social relationships, and categories of consciousness underpinning modern nationalism, not least because of the use of a common language. Thus, Independence movements in Latin America in the early 19th century were not simple revolts against a crumbling Spanish empire, but rather affirmations of concepts, models, and blueprints for modern societies. For how this wider process unfolded in Chile, see Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt's (2014[1992]) *La Independencia de Chile. Tradición, Modernidad y Mito*.

Throughout the 19th century, the hallmark of this development was the stubborn persistence of the old society amid a modernisation process led through the state. In their haciendas, the elites acted as landlords, supervising the reproduction of the hierarchical and conservative agrarian world which had been the basis of Chilean society since the Spanish conquest in the 15th century. In Santiago and other major regional cities, the same elites stimulated capitalist and urban development (Zetlin and Ratcliff, 1988), and created the political (Parliament) and educational institutions (Instituto Nacional, Universidad de Chile; more on this below) of the nascent republic, both encouraging the first contours of civil society and the public sphere (Jocelyn-Holt, 2008). Still, for much of the 19th century, so strong was the cohesion and dominance of this small aristocratic group that an observer tellingly noted that ‘four blocks in Santiago had the control of the whole nation’ (McCutchen McBride, 1936, in Vicuña 2010[2001], p. 21).⁴⁶

By mid-19th century, however, the first signs of greater openness in the ranks of the elite became apparent. In the absence of sociological research, some of the key developments are illustrated in the literature of the period. In his novel *Martín Rivas*, Alberto Blest Gana (2018[1862]) portrays a talented law student (from poor and provincial origins) who comes to study to the capital and live with a wealthy family (from bourgeois rather than aristocratic stock), getting married at the end with the host’s daughter (the haughty Leonor).⁴⁷ If the new values embodied in the marriage between Martín and Leonor seem an invitation to reject the

⁴⁶ Many well-informed observers have remained highly sceptical about the modernising achievements of the creole elites. In his insightful essay on Mexico, *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, Octavio Paz underlines a wider and characteristic Latin American divorce between ideology and reality in the following terms: ‘The liberal democratic ideology, far from expressing our concrete historical situation, obscured it. The political lie installed itself almost constitutionally among our countries. The moral damage has been incalculable and reaches into deep layers of our character. Lies are something we move in with ease. During more than a hundred years we have suffered regimes of brute force, which were at the service of feudal oligarchies, but utilised the language of liberty.’ (Paz 1959[1950], pp. 110-11; my own translation)

⁴⁷ In its Chilean recreation of the motifs of careers open to talent and love between unequals, *Martín Rivas* amply echoes Stendhal’s (2019[1830]) *Le Rouge et le Noir*; though without being a mere reproduction of the latter novel.

old conventions, in reality *Best Gana* shows that this occurs largely because the protagonist displays university credentials *and* proves his ability to increase the family's wealth. Indeed, he only wins Leonor's heart when she becomes aware of the economic benefits owed by her family to the diligent services provided by Martín. Thus, Leonor's father accepts Martín as a member of his family, ceding the administration of his businesses to his son-in-law in order to dedicate himself fully to politics—the activity *par excellence* of patricians.⁴⁸

Blest Gana's novel demonstrates a perceptive grasp of the paradox of possibility and restriction of the Chilean society of his time. While the incipient process of industrialisation was indeed tied to the expansion of bourgeois values, the advance of capitalism was still far from emancipated from aristocratic concerns. Martín's father-in-law sums this up well: after accumulating enough wealth, he strives to secure the insignia linked with aristocratic belonging—the acquisition of an estate, the longing of titles, his involvement in politics. At the same time, if only by their omission, *Blest Gana* confirms that ascriptive characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity, effectively blocked or hindered upward mobility. A noticeable part of Martín's social ascent is undoubtedly based on him being male and white—or white enough not to unsettle prevailing social mores. And these forms of social exclusion lingered well into the 20th century: the majority of the adult population, composed by women and the poor, remained ineligible for full citizenship or from exercising the professions.⁴⁹ Martín's rise was the exception, not the rule.

⁴⁸ There are, of course, different interpretations of the novel. Some insist that what is at stake is the exchange value of merit—as signalled through university credentials—according to enlightened standards (Jocelyn-Holt, 2014[1997], pp. 61-2); others, instead, highlight the exchange of existing wealth for the ability to create more in the future (Vicuña, 2010[2001], p. 57). In my view, both of these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and can work together, thus providing a more nuanced account of a society in the slow transition towards the predominance of bourgeois values.

⁴⁹ At Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, for instance, women were only allowed to study medicine from 1953 onwards (Sepúlveda, 2019, p. 1186).

These tensions became particularly apparent in the last quarter of the 19th century. The period was marked by the explosive wealth created by world-renowned nitrate boom in the north, the burgeoning financial market of Valparaíso, and the expansion of telecommunications and transport (O'Brien, 1982). Although the traditional landowning elites still maintained control of the economy, they tended to pluralise their ranks. As they amassed enough wealth, German, English, and French immigrants intermingled—mostly via marriage⁵⁰—with the old Castilian-Basque aristocracy crystallised in the 18th century (Jocelyn-Holt, 2008; Stabili, 1996, pp. 137-55). A still thin middle class, gradually shifting from small private business to state employment through public education, slowly gained visibility in the urban centres (González Le Saux, 2011).⁵¹ The vast agrarian world, experiencing a proletarianisation of its forms of entrepreneurship, intensified its migration to the main cities or industrial districts (Salazar, 1986). If this period was more open than in the past to make riches, that openness was coupled with massive inequality: just as wealth piled up in the banks of Santiago and Valparaíso, cities were crowded with poverty and destitution (Bértola *et al.*, 2009).⁵²

⁵⁰ Tellingly, in her book *Il Sentimento Aristocratico: Élite Cilene allo Specchio (1860-1960)*, historian Maria Rosaria Stabili (1996, p. 146) speaks of a 'permeabilità selettiva' (*selective permeability*) involving complex and multiple criteria through which established elites deployed—a task undertaken chiefly by elite women—to accept outsiders as potential relatives. Significantly, too, this selective permeability functioned as a mechanism of individual co-optation of outsiders by the Chilean upper classes, which contributed to ensure their high cohesion as a class over time (see also Vicuña, 2010[2001]).

⁵¹ In her *De Empresarios a Empleados*, Marianne González Le Saux (2011) shows how a middle class, formed outside the state, existed in Chile throughout the 19th century. Largely composed by artisans, small merchants, rural owners, mining entrepreneurs, this middle class saw its position and status deteriorate towards the end of the century and the beginning of the 20th century. Contrary to conventional accounts, González Le Saux convincingly argues that the offspring of these sectors were reconverted—via a process of 'horizontal mobility'—from *private entrepreneurs* to *state employees* through access to the secondary state schools known as *liceos* and then to university.

⁵² In his recent book, *Desarrollo y Desigualdad en Chile (1850-2009)*, economic historian Javier Rodríguez-Weber (2018) challenges conventional interpretations about inequality in this period. Indeed, Rodríguez-Weber maintains that the period 1850-1873—termed 'Globalisation and Institutional Inertia'—appears as phase of escalating inequality, while in fact in the subsequent period 1873-1903—called 'Crisis and Expansion of the Border'—this trend is substantially reversed. Rodríguez-Weber argues that this is largely due to the income losses caused by the economic crisis of 1873 for the elite and the new opportunities to land ownership created by the territorial expansion to the south of the nation based on a more equal access to property. Still, Rodríguez-Weber confirms that the period between 1903 and 1938—tellingly referred to as 'The Return of Inequality and the End of the Oligarchic Republic'—inequality once again increased considerably.

As the Belle Époque elites became a distinct class, they withdrew themselves socially, culturally, and spatially from the rest of society. Echoing similar developments in Europe and the US, at the same time that the world became economically more open, other forms of social closure arose. Wealth mattered significantly, and this was something that the Chilean elites actively displayed in their mansions. As the command of French and English became more dominant markers of class distinction (Bourdieu, 1984[1979]), new spaces for exclusive interaction were created in Santiago: *Teatro Municipal*, confining orchestras and operas to a select few; *Parque Cousiño*⁵³—inspired by Bois de Boulogne and Hyde Park—*Quinta Normal*, and *Club Hípico*, functioning as restricted settings for aristocratic recreation and the ‘appropriate’ choice of spouses; and *Club de la Unión*, the stronghold of male oligarchic sociability and backstage of party politics (Vicuña, 2010[2001], Ch. 1). By the turn of the century, these spaces gave shape to a narrow upper class heavily marked by the trappings of entitlement, high culture, and close family connections.

Yet in the early decades of the 20th century the world of the elites was ruptured.⁵⁴ Against a backdrop marked by the economic slump linked to the saltpetre crisis, the troublesome increase in urban poverty, the rise of new political actors supported by an anti-oligarchic and reformist middle class (Barr-Melej, 2001) and a stronger working-class movement (Angell, 1972), challenged their longstanding supremacy. The arrangements achieved during the 1920s and 1930s enhanced the institutional space of the enlarged middle classes tied to the professions, commerce, and the bureaucratic, educational, and productive apparatus of the state (Candina, 2009; Casals, 2017), although the traditional upper classes—still controlling

⁵³ Parque Cousiño was later renamed as Parque O’Higgins.

⁵⁴ Early signs of the fractures, indeed open conflict, within the Chilean elites were the foundation of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in 1888 (more on this below) and, above all, the Civil War of 1891.

the haciendas—retained much of their power as holders of prestige and influence (Correa Sutil, 2004; Zeitlin and Ratcliff, 1988). The pact reached between the leading representatives of the middle classes and the traditional elites, often sealed through matrimonial alliances (Correa Sutil *et al.*, 2001, pp. 158-9), dominated much of Chilean society and politics throughout the middle decades of the 20th century.

Unlike other Latin American countries, the remarkable temporal continuity of the traditional elites only declined in the 1960s, as the nation embarked on revolutionary politics. Mass poverty, fuelled by country-to-city migration, burst once again onto the urban scene: Santiago and other major cities multiplied their populations in a few decades. By the early 1960s, under increasing pressure from the poor and stagnating economic growth, politics entered a national-populist dynamic led by successive Christian Democrat (Frei Montalva, 1964-1970⁵⁵) and Socialist (Allende, 1970-1973⁵⁶) administrations (Correa Sutil *et al.*, 2001, pp. 158-69, 197-276). Both governments launched strong redistributive policies, including an agrarian reform aimed at reducing the extreme land concentration prevailing at the time. This reform, in particular, which heightened during Allende's government, destabilised the foundations of the economic, social, and cultural power of the traditional elites—never to recover (Jocelyn-Holt, 1998).⁵⁷ The structural basis of Chile's *ancien régime*, and with it a large proportion of the old elites, were finally gone.

⁵⁵ From 1964 to 1970, Eduardo Frei Montalva led a Christian Democratic government that sought a 'revolution in liberty'. A recipient of substantial financial aid from the US government, Frei Montalva's administration attempted to achieve social justice and inclusion through reform, though in fact paved the way for Salvador Allende's subsequent reach to political power.

⁵⁶ Salvador Allende's election in 1970 galvanised left-wing radicals across the globe, who saw in Chile a unique opportunity to build a peaceful and democratic 'Chilean Path to Socialism'.

⁵⁷ The impact of the agrarian reform was dramatic. If in 1955 the top 7 percent of landowners held 65 percent of the land and the bottom 37 percent held only 1 percent, by the end of Allende's administration 43 percent of the land had been expropriated (Kay, 2002, p. 471, table 1). An agrarian counter-reform was subsequently driven by Pinochet's military regime as a way of returning the land to its former owners. Significantly, however, Pinochet did not restore the traditional hacienda order. The new administration gave back only a third of the plots to their old owners, traded another third, and allocated the remaining third to the small owners who benefited from the agrarian reform. Yet in the ensuing years, most small proprietors, unable to compete with

Yet Allende's redistributive agenda was abruptly halted by a US-supported military coup d'état in 1973. The ensuing dictatorship, led by Augusto Pinochet until 1990, transformed Chile from a closed economy with strong state intervention into one of the most open, market-based economies in the world. During these long 17 years, Pinochet's dictatorship implemented pioneering, radical, and systematic policies: macroeconomic stabilisation, deregulation of prices and markets, the privatisation of public enterprises, and social services—all backed by fierce political repression (Ffrench-Davis, 2017).⁵⁸ These so-called neoliberal policies, subsequently applied in much of the world and turned into a 'Washington consensus' paradigm (Williamson, 1990), deeply changed Chilean society and its class structure. Indeed, from the 1980s onwards, at the same time that the economic elites were remade under a 'hierarchical capitalism' led by business groups linked to multinational corporations (Schneider, 2013), the traditional middle and working classes, once closely tied to state employment and industrialisation, were shattered (Casals, 2017; Tironi and Martínez, 1985; Winn, 2004).

Since the return of democracy in 1990, these vast transformations have crystallised in a new social structure.⁵⁹ The sustained economic growth and expanding educational opportunities

low-priced food imports, sold their plots to a new group of export-oriented entrepreneurs and international investors. As a result, as much as two thirds of Chilean agricultural land came up for sale, creating an active land market ultimately captured by this entrepreneurial class which became part of the new economic elites emerging under Pinochet.

⁵⁸ Internationally, Pinochet's military regime epitomises the spread of political authoritarianism fomented by the counterrevolution that engulfed much of Latin America from the mid-1970s onwards. Yet, as I noted above, this was also part of a wider historical process of extreme ruptures and ideological polarisation initiated in the 1960s, putting Chile at the centre of the hopes, vicissitudes, and tragedies that marked the Cold War. During the 1970s, supporters of Pinochet's authoritarian regime, nationals and foreigners alike, rallied around the dictator's goal of ridding the nation of communism and then creating a free-market society (Harvey, 1980). This was the larger background allowing the foundations to be laid in Chile and far beyond for the establishment of radical neoliberal policy frameworks. In the 1980s and 1990s, these frameworks contributed to heightened individualism and social fragmentation, foreclosing many of the wider, social democratic options available in much of Latin America in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

⁵⁹ Once democracy was recovered, many again looked to Chile—just as they did earlier with the Frei Montalva, Allende, and Pinochet governments—for the prospect of realising an alternative future. Largely echoing Anthony Giddens's (1998) *The Third Way*, during the presidencies of the centre-left Concertación (1990-2010) this prospect included the promise of combining neoliberal governance with soft social democratic reforms

have given rise to a new entrepreneurial class at the very apex of society (Solimano, 2012, Ch. 7; see also Ruiz and Boccardo, 2015; Ossandón, 2013; Schneider, 2009, 2013; Salvaj, 2013)⁶⁰, an extended and more variegated upper middle class (Méndez and Gayo, 2019)⁶¹, a large and highly precarious lower middle class (Canales, 2007)—often occupying a financial position barely above the poverty line (Neilson *et al.*, 2008; Maldonado and Prieto, 2015)—and small but tenacious pockets of poverty. Significantly, this new social structure displays important signs of convergence with the effects of neoliberal restructuring in numerous societies across the globe, marked by wealth concentration at the top, extended though highly dissimilar middle classes, and a precariat at the bottom (see Jodhka *et al.*, 2018; Savage *et al.*, 2015).

Despite—or perhaps because of—these intense and large-scale transformations, class reproduction at the upper echelons of contemporary Chilean society continues to be shaped by exclusive private education (Madrid, 2016; Zimmerman, 2019a), acute residential segregation (Sabatini *et al.*, 2001, 2010), matrimonial alliances (Hunneus, 2013), family names (Aguilar, 2011), and membership to conservative religious movements (Thumala, 2007). If our current elites are no longer the highly integrated landed aristocracy which prevailed until

that would achieve ‘growth with equity’. Scholars like Marcus Taylor (2006) could thus argue that Chile was a successful Latin American version of a ‘third way’ between orthodox neoliberalism and centre-leftist projects.

⁶⁰ The effect of neoliberal restructuring at the top is evident in the extreme relative wealth and influence of this small group: the richest 1 percent concentrates 30 percent of national income, the wealthiest 0.1 percent accounts for 17 percent, and the top 0.01 percent controls more than 10 percent, respectively (López *et al.*, 2013, p. 24; see also Fairfield and Jorrat, 2014). From a wider historical perspective, it is important to note Pinochet’s dictatorship and the subsequent democratic period (1973-2009) are characterised by a pronounced increase in inequality, especially if this is compared to the previous period (1938-1970) (see Rodríguez-Weber, 2018).

⁶¹ Méndez and Gayo (2019: Ch. 6) offer a useful typology to understand the variation within the upper middle class in Santiago, distinguishing between ‘inheritors’, ‘achievers’, and ‘incomers/settlers’. The authors argue that although there is a relatively shared pattern in terms of schooling and housing among them, there is also significant fragmentation along the lines of cultural repertoires and social mobility. Unlike the advantages and conservative worldview held by inheritors, achievers and incomers/settlers strive to improve their positions, but do so largely on the basis of a meritocratic discourse.

the 1960s, they still show a persistent tendency towards social closure, restricting opportunities for meritocratic mobility.

The Historical Fabrics of the Elites: Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

A considerable body of research documents that education plays a pivotal role in both intergenerational class reproduction and social mobility (Hout and DiPrete, 2006). This role is even more relevant in Latin America, given the historically weak redistributive function of states and the high returns from post-secondary schooling (Morley, 2001; Psacharopoulos, 1994). Throughout Chile's modern history, like in most Western societies, a handful of educational institutions have consolidated as the main fabrics of the elites: Instituto Nacional, Universidad de Chile, and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. These three educational institutions, characterised both by the specific type of cultural capital they transmit to their graduates and the distinctive cultural ethos and self-conception they instil in them—often acting as potent cultural repertoires—have been and remain central players in both the reproduction of privilege and in the creation of opportunities for upward mobility.⁶²

Launched in 1813, Instituto Nacional (IN hereafter) was the first educational institution established by the creole leaders during the early years of the Wars of Independence. As such, it was conceived as the cornerstone of a civic community based on a republican order, whose

⁶² In this respect, Chile's educational system is not substantially different from what occurs in other Western societies, where elite recruitment is channelled via 'public schools' and Oxbridge (Britain), *grandes écoles* (France), or Ivy League colleges (US). In Latin America, echoing the Chilean experience, the Mexican case shows the combination of both public (Universidad Autónoma de México, or UNAM) and private (Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Universidad Iberoamericana, and Colegio de México) elite institutions. Regardless of their idiosyncratic differences, what unites all these different elite universities is the fact that they constitute 'an institutional nucleus that provides the platform for the task of training the elites' in each national context (Brunner, 2012, pp. 123-6).

mission was to give birth to educated and virtuous citizens in charge of leading the nation (Serrano, 1990). IN, devoting its initial efforts both to secondary schooling and higher education, was the basis for the creation of the national educational system in subsequent decades (Campos Harriet, 1960). Throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century, this central institution stood out as a breeding ground for public leaders and conspicuous public figures, contributing in a modest but not irrelevant way to the diversification of the traditional elites (Yeager, 1991).⁶³

Universidad de Chile (UCH hereafter), the first university created in the nation, was established in 1842 under the preeminent aegis of Andrés Bello.⁶⁴ Empowered to supervise all educational establishments in the nation, public and private alike, UCH stimulated the formation of a centralised education system, the apparatus of which acted for decades as an instrument in the service of the traditional elite based in Santiago (Serrano, 1994, pp. 252-3). Although conceived with national scope and meritocratic selection standards, during the large part of the 19th century UCH was restricted to the formation of a narrow ruling class of landowner, commercial, mining, and financial origins (González, 2011, pp. 338-64; Serrano, 1994, p. 70, 246). Still, for much of this initial period, UCH significantly contributed to the expansion of the enlightened circles and secularising forces within Chilean society,

⁶³ Marianne González Le Saux (2011, p. 344) argues that IN, as a teaching platform, acted as prominent channel in the social ascent of key public figures such as Andrés Bello, Ignacio Domeyko, or Manuel Montt during the 19th century. It is important to note, on the other hand, that institutions like IN are not exclusive to Chile. For an account of how similar educational institutions were built and developed in other Latin American nations, such as Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires in Argentina, see Alicia Méndez's (2013) *El Colegio. La Formación de una Élite Meritocrática en el Nacional Buenos Aires*. As I show throughout this thesis, IN also plays a leading role among the so-called *liceos emblemáticos*—a set of prestigious state schools created in the late 19th and early 20th century and which have boosted access to higher education among the upwardly mobile in recent decades (see Chapter 6, 7 and 9).

⁶⁴ To understand the cultural density—at once Classical, European and, above all, Hispano-American—crystallising in the founding father of UCH, see Joaquín Trujillo Silva's (2019) *Andrés Bello: libertad, imperio, estilo*. Trujillo makes it abundantly clear why Bello does not fit what Brazilian writer Oswald de Andrade (1928) famously called '*las elites vegetales*' (the vegetating elites): a pejorative term applied both to the Latin American intellectuals copying foreign models and to an unproductive landowning class.

though without questioning the basic prerogatives or worldview of the old Castilian-Basque elite.

In the last quarter of the 19th century and the early 20th century, under the influence of leading figures such as Gustave Courcelle-Seneuil⁶⁵ and Valentín Letelier⁶⁶, UCH strengthened a liberal and positivist bent. In this period, two mutually reinforcing trends became apparent. UCH consolidated as a secularising force and, when liberal intellectuals gained control of this institution and its broad powers over the national education system, they spread their ideas further in order to reach a wider public. At the same time, by training professionals endowed with the knowledge and prestige to meet the requirements of a modernising society, it gradually opened up more channels for social advancement for students from less privileged backgrounds (González, 2011, pp. 338-44). Both of these features—the expansion of liberal and positivist ideas and the admission of new entrants to higher education—represented well the principles and aspirations of the rising middle classes, which defended merit and personal effort over the ascribed privileges they associated with the traditional elites (Silva, 2010, Ch. 1 and 2).

By the end of the 19th century, these developments spurred the creation of another university: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC hereafter). Founded in 1888 by the most conservative members of the traditional elites, PUC emerged to counter the secular,

⁶⁵ Courcelle-Seneuil, author of *Liberté et Socialisme* (1868) and a central figure in 19th century liberalism in Europe, lived in Chile for almost 10 years, hired by the state to teach political economy at IN and UCH, in addition to advising the Ministry of Finance. The French thinker not only built the foundations of economics as an academic discipline in Chile, but also had a significant influence in training leaders such as Miguél Cruchaga, Zorobabel Rodríguez, or Nicomedes Ossa (Jocelyn-Holt, 2019; see also Correa Sutil, 1997).

⁶⁶ Letelier, a lawyer and politician educated at IN and UCH, became a crucial figure in the introduction of positivist ideas and the rise of the middle class and supported the Partido Radical in *fin-de-siècle* Chile. Significantly, Letelier also served as rector of UCH between 1906 and 1913 (see Galdames, 1937; see also Ruiz Schneider, 2010, Ch. 3).

positivist, and professional orientation of UCH.⁶⁷ Unlike the latter, the salient traits of the former were its confessionalism, aristocratism and social distinction closely tied to Chile's Catholic elites—and crystallising in a missionary vision of life (Krebs *et al.*, 1994, pp. 3-35). Drawing on these divergent traditions and Turner's (1960) well-known typology, Brunner (2012) has argued that UCH is characterised by a 'culture of competition' between those from elite backgrounds and outsiders, whereas PUC is linked with a 'culture of sponsorship' for those from non-elite backgrounds.

Throughout the 20th century, as the higher educational system slowly expanded, both UCH and PUC strengthened their leading positions in the formation of the elites, while retaining their distinctive cultural profiles.⁶⁸ In the 1960s, when less than 10 percent of the age cohort between 20 and 24 years was enrolled in higher education (Bernasconi and Rojas, 2003), these characteristics were visible in the social composition of the student body. In those years, 9.4 percent and 29.8 percent of students at UCH came from upper-class and upper middle-class backgrounds, respectively, whereas at PUC those figures reached 34 percent and 36.4 percent; while UCH registered equal proportions of students educated at private and public schools, at PUC 82 percent came from private schools and only 18 percent came from the state secondary schools known as *liceos* (Brunner, 1985, pp. 275-88). Thus, while UCH gradually opened up its doors to the middle classes—eventually acquiring a distinctive

⁶⁷ The foundation of PUC was part of a wider process in the defence and promotion of the interests of the Church in Chilean society undertaken by traditionalist Catholics. In the 1850s, mobilised by the Conservative Party, they encouraged the creation of male secondary schools established by religious orders, such as Colegio San Ignacio led by the Jesuits (Krebs *et al.*, 1994: Ch. 1 and 2; see also Loverman and Lira, 1999).

⁶⁸ Between 1924 and 1973, Chile went through an extensive industrialisation process led by the state, in which public expenditure grew significantly and new higher education institutions were founded across the nation (Ruiz Schneider, 2010, Ch. 4). During this period, six universities were created and higher education enrolment underwent its biggest increase thus far—reaching 55,000 students in 1967. One new state-owned university was founded—Universidad Técnica del Estado, now Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH)—and five new privately-owned universities: Universidad de Concepción, Universidad Austral de Chile, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Universidad del Norte, and Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María (OECD, 2013). At the same time, UCH and PUC experienced a considerable territorial expansion, founding campuses in several regions of the country.

mesocratic stamp—PUC preserved the cultural traits of the ruling class, with their marked combination of aristocratic and bourgeois outlooks—the characteristic culture of what Bourdieu calls *les héritiers* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964).

During the 1970s and 1980s, however, the Chilean higher educational system was substantially altered. Redesigned under the guidance of the monetarist doctrines of the Chicago School (Gárate, 2012), higher education—and, in general, the entire Chilean educational system (see Chapter 6)—underwent a profound transformation with respect to its previous trajectory. Universities ceased to be a space for the formation of the elites, or the critical development of the nation, and became increasingly organised around the market and competition (Jocelyn-Holt, 2015; Ruiz Schneider, 2010). In the ensuing decades, Pinochet’s educational reforms gave rise to an explosive university expansion dominated by private institutions and soon reaching levels of massification similar to those of industrialised nations (Brunner and Villalobos, 2014). This wider shift also affected the functioning of UCH and PUC. Pinochet’s authoritarian regime heavily intervened and dismantled the national structure of UCH (Jocelyn-Holt, 2015, Ch. 4), while prominent scholars trained at PUC—the *gremialista* leader Jaime Guzmán⁶⁹ and the so-called Chicago Boys⁷⁰—played an increasingly influential role in shaping both policies and politics (Valdes, 2020[1995]); Valdivia, 2008).

⁶⁹ *Gremialismo* is the conservative student movement founded by the lawyer Jaime Guzmán in 1967 to counter the rise of left-wing student radicalism at PUC, and later giving rise to Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI)—the strongest right-wing political party in contemporary Chile (see Valdivia, 2008: Introduction and Ch. 3). During the 1970s and 1980s, Jaime Guzmán served as the architect of the legal and constitutional framework of Pinochet’s dictatorship.

⁷⁰ In the 1950s, the US government funded an academic programme to train Chilean economists from PUC at the University of Chicago at post-graduate level. Between 1955 and 1964, 30 Chilean economists were trained in the monetarist and free-market ideas advocated by Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek (see Valdes, 2020 [1995]), pp. 112-7, 181-3). Upon their return to Chile, based at PUC but also operating in business circles and in public service, the Chicago Boys played a crucial role in the design and implementation of the neoliberal policies enacted during Pinochet’s protracted dictatorship (Silva, 1996)—a period in which both Friedman and von Hayek themselves visited the country to give a series of conferences and advise Pinochet (Caldwell and Montes, 2015; Montes, 2020).

Both UCH and PUC remain the most selective and renowned academic institutions in the nation. However, mirroring analogous developments in the Global North and other Latin American nations, they now function under a massified higher education system marked by a duality between a large group of universities for mass education versus a small group of universities focused on educating the elites (Brunner, 2012). The field of elite universities has been enlarged by the emergence of new private universities, which are less selective and prestigious than UCH and PUC and mainly focused on training students from wealthy backgrounds (Villalobos *et al.*, 2020).⁷¹ In this new higher educational landscape, UCH positions itself as the institution providing the training for future leaders, though also emphasising its public commitment and the opportunity for disadvantaged students to become part of the new elites. In turn, PUC, although less emphatic about its public mission, similarly highlights its goal of forming the leaders of the nation, while also opening its doors to upward mobility for talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Villalobos *et al.*, forthcoming).

The routes and structures within which mobility takes place have continually been reworked throughout Chile's modern history and especially since the reforms in higher education in the early 1980s. However, attendance at UCH and PUC, and on particular courses within these institutions, remains the central *locus* in which both class privilege persists and channels for meritocratic mobility are shaped. Significantly, in recent years, largely in response to new demands for greater inclusion at elite universities (see Chapter 4), both UCH and PUC have implemented more comprehensive inclusion programmes for students from disadvantaged

⁷¹ The new 'elite' universities are: Universidad del Desarrollo, Universidad de Los Andes, and Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. Although the latter institution was created in 1953, it has gained a stronger student enrolment and reputation in business circles in recent decades.

backgrounds. These programmes have established ‘special quotas’ in the enrolment to UCH and PUC for ‘talented’ students from low-income backgrounds who would not otherwise gain admission and subsequently help them via mentoring and/or peer support (Santelices *et al.*, 2018).⁷²

A Select Group of Professions: Law, Medicine, Engineering

UCH and PUC also matter in the making of elite professions. Indeed, both universities have been crucial in the formation of a hierarchy of status that distinguishes a ‘select nucleus’ of professions guaranteeing cultural recognition, social networks, and future economic security, from other occupations (Brunner and Flisfich, 2014[1983], p. 249). The most prestigious professions in Chile—law, medicine, and engineering (UNDP, 2017)—were one of the main products of the higher education system created in the 19th century (Serrano, 1994, p. 256). From then until the present day, this select group of professions—comprising the upper echelons of what Goldthorpe (1980) termed the ‘service class’—remain the central occupational streams structuring class reproduction and providing opportunities of long-range upward mobility.

Historically, law occupies the most prestigious position among the professions. As the ‘career of power’ (Serrano, 1994, p. 176), the legal profession was the link of continuity between the aristocratic values inherited from the colonial period and the more meritocratic values associated with the Chilean republic. Throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century, lawyers dedicated themselves to lead both the nation’s public affairs and business, bringing

⁷² However, given their very recent implementation, none of these programmes are assessed in this research (more on this in Chapter 4).

together both patrician and bourgeois insignia. While law was initially the exclusive domain of the traditional elites, it gradually opened up its doors to outsiders. It is not incidental that this was the profession that enabled the ascent of Martín Rivas. Law was also the springboard profession many people who later became well-known public figures like José Joaquín Vallejo, Eliodoro Yáñez, or Valentín Letelier (Serrano, 1994, p. 175, 178). However, in a period marked by a very low participation in higher education, the legal profession played only a ‘modest role’ in the diversification of the Chilean elites (González, 2011, p. 348; see also Urzúa, 1978, p. 191).

Unlike law, medicine and engineering—professions based on the modern experimental sciences—emerged directly from state sponsorship to face the twin challenges of industrialisation and public health issues. Yet in their origins, both medicine and engineering struggled to gain a reputation fit for the standards of the traditional elite. Largely because of its ‘manual’ and ‘practical’ application, for instance, the medical profession was considered ‘less honourable’ than law (Serrano, 1994, p. 185). However, by the end of the 19th century, doctors managed to build effective social demand for professional knowledge and specialised medical services guaranteed by the state. Significantly, the medical profession also constituted a broader channel to diversify the social origins of Chile’s elites than law, as its student body was composed primarily by people from the provincial middle classes (González, 2011, p. 349).

Much like medicine, engineering originally struggled to achieve a recognised place among high-status occupations. However, although the introduction of engineering in Chile was modelled on the prestigious French image of the *ingénieur polytechnicien* tied to senior

management⁷³, this profession did not succeed in constituting a state monopoly of its services as medicine did. The state was certainly key to building its cognitive base and validating it as scientific knowledge, and later to establish a demand for its professional services via the Ministry of Industry and Public Works, but, at least during the 19th century, it was less determinant in consecrating this profession with the renowned standing enjoyed by law or medicine (Serrano, 1994, pp. 204-20). Importantly, and again like medicine, the student composition of engineering was more socially diverse than that of law (González, 2011, p. 354).

Throughout the 20th century, law, medicine, and engineering—regardless of their different origins—consolidated as elite occupations. Chilean lawyers, who were the nation's leading statesmen during the 19th century, retained much of their former influence in the 1920s with the creation of the Chilean Bar Association—an institution that secured benefits for its members by gaining access to the state (Ibáñez, 2003, pp. 300-06). However, in this same period, both medicine and engineering also became highly coveted and institutionalised professions.⁷⁴ Indeed, their role in the state administration increased considerably: the medical profession, championing its leading role in the management of public health issues, gained control of large parts of the state apparatus in this critical area (Illanes, 2007, pp. 52–57), while a degree in engineering rapidly became an expedient channel to high-status state employment and senior management—so much so, that they were referred to as an 'oligarchic technocracy' (Ibáñez, 2003, p. 126; Silva, 2010: Ch. 2 and 3).⁷⁵

⁷³ For the main features defining the French image of engineering, see Bouffartigue and Marry (1996) and Eckert *et al.*, (2003).

⁷⁴ The Medical Professional Association (Colegio Médico) was created in 1948 (Candina, 2016), while the Professional Engineering Association (Colegio de Ingenieros) was formed in 1958 (Colegio de Ingenieros de Chile, 2008).

⁷⁵ These idiosyncratic developments mark a noteworthy difference from the formation and prestige tied to elite professions elsewhere. In Britain, for instance, the formation of the middle classes was also shaped by the strong involvement of the state. Yet in the British case, unlike the Chilean one, a stronger divide between the

If the relative prestige of law, medicine, and engineering tended to balance out throughout the 20th century, these professions remained almost the exclusive realm of high-status males. From their origins, a strong *gender imbalance* has been one of the distinctive traits of these elite professions. The force of these gendered norms has slowly waned across generations.⁷⁶ The first female lawyer in Chile graduated in 1892. By 1945, women represented 7 percent of the total profession. That figure reached 25 percent by around 1970 (Klimpel, 1962, pp. 167-70). Medicine followed a similar trend (Sepúlveda, 2019).⁷⁷ In recent years, there has been a substantial gender equalisation in both law and medicine.⁷⁸ However, engineering, the quintessential male profession, has stubbornly remained more resistant to the participation of women. The first woman to obtain a professional degree in Civil Engineering did so as late as 1919. Until the 1980s, the participation of women in the Faculty of Engineering at UCH barely reached a meagre 10 percent and has only gradually increased in recent decades (Espinoza, 2013).⁷⁹ As I show in Chapter 7 and 8, these persistent gender disparities play an important part in the adjustment of the long-range upwardly mobile to these elite professions.

so-called ‘gentlemanly’ professions—such as law or medicine—and the more managerial or technical professions—like engineering—still persists to this day (Savage *et al.*, 1992, Ch. 3; see also Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019).

⁷⁶ Women’s access to higher education was opened in 1877 with the enactment of the so-called ‘Amunátegui decree’, which made the examinations of girls’ private schools valid (Klimpel, 1962, p. 99).

⁷⁷ From the late 19th century until the 1960s, women were allowed to enrol in medicine, but vacancies were restricted to 10 percent of overall enrolment at UCH. At PUC, women were only allowed to study this profession from 1953 onwards (Sepúlveda, 2019, p. 1186).

⁷⁸ In 2020, women’s enrolment at UCH in law and medicine reached 64.06 percent and 47.26 percent, respectively (Carvajal, 2020).

⁷⁹ This trend has accelerated only since 2014 with the implementation of the ‘Programa de Ingreso Prioritario de Equidad de Género’ (Gender Equity Priority Entry Programme). As of 2019, women represent 27 percent of all students at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH (Espinoza, 2019).

Equally relevant is the shift in the identity of elite professions from public service towards the private sector since the neoliberal shift of the 1970s and 1980s—an orientation largely overlooked by research on social stratification and mobility. The legal profession, for instance, has been marked by the transition from an orientation primarily devoted to public affairs towards a competitive, specialised, and stratified practice of advocacy in the private sector (Delamaza, 2002). In a current context of mass provision of law degrees, access to competitive employment, especially for those legal firms working with corporate clients, mainly depends on a combination of a number of key features: the alma mater of graduates, post-graduate education, and command of English (Delamaza, 2002, p. 212; see also Idealis, 2017). Unsurprisingly, as I show in Chapter 8, these demands put those from non-elite backgrounds at greater disadvantage.

Medicine has seen an even more pronounced transformation. Countering its traditional identity associated with public service, the medical profession has seen an expansion of the private sector in recent decades. This was rooted in reforms of the 1980s, when the national health system was steered towards a dual functioning: *public* and *private* provision of health services. Although private health service providers have been primarily concentrated on higher income populations, some of them have also expanded towards less affluent patients (Homedes and Ugalde, 2002; Unger *et al.*, 2008). Over the same period, the medical profession has also shown the consolidation of a ‘pro-specialist culture’ (Breinbauer *et al.*, 2009). This has shaped the orientation of medical training both at UCH and PUC, though with a stronger force in the latter case.⁸⁰ As I reveal in Chapter 8, these transformations are significant for understanding the way in which the long-range upwardly mobile navigate the medical profession.

⁸⁰ I owe this information to Denisse Zúñiga.

Mirroring the case of medicine and law, engineering has also shifted its professional identity from public service towards the private sector. This reorientation has implied a larger displacement among those in charge of the economy: from the senior executives trained at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH to the commercial engineers⁸¹ with MBAs educated at PUC—the alma mater of the economists who undertook the neoliberal reforms under Pinochet—or with postgraduate degrees from top universities in the US (Nazer, 2012). In engineering, like law, the chances of getting access to competitive employment amply depends on the university affiliation of graduates, the ‘cultural match’ between candidate and firm, and their command of English (Cofré, 2018). Once again, as I uncover in Chapter 8, these requirements function as additional barriers for the long-range upwardly mobile exercising this profession.

Significantly, both in terms of social class and gender, the privatisation of high-status occupations has not made them more open to outsiders. A staggering 84 percent of the family names of those who exercise these three elite professions come from the Castilian-Basque aristocracy of the 18th century (*Larraín, Echeñique, Errázuriz*, etc.) and/or non-Spanish European family names (mostly German, Italian, and English) (UNDP, 2017, p. 354). In addition to the lingering influence of class backgrounds, a persistent gender gap criss-crosses these three high-status occupations. The probability of men being represented in these professions is 3.6 times higher than for women (UNDP, 2017, p. 95), and the participation of the latter in positions of power remains marginal (Comunidad Mujer, 2016; UNDP, 2010, 2020). A meagre 12 percent of women occupy positions at the top

⁸¹ Commercial engineering corresponds to an academic programme highly idiosyncratic to Chile. Its equivalence elsewhere would be a business studies degree, but commercial engineering also includes the possibility of developing a specialty in economics and not just management.

management and executive positions among leading corporations, and only 6.6 percent sit on the boards of directors (Comunidad Mujer, 2016).⁸²

Thus, despite the sharp expansion of educational opportunities in recent decades, Chile's top professions remain predominantly composed by males from upper-class or upper middle-class backgrounds. Under such conditions, the promise of greater openness at the upper echelons of society still seems an elusive reality for the long-range upwardly mobile, and particularly so for women from disadvantaged origins (Chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have provided a general overview of processes of class reproduction and mobility at the upper echelons of society and their main continuities and changes over time. In dialogue with existing historiographical and sociological research and the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2, I have focused on the transformation of Chile's social classes throughout its modern history, paying especial attention to processes of openness and closure at the top. In particular, I highlighted the main dynamics of class division and integration, the role played by key educational institutions, and high-status occupations in this process.

Throughout this chapter, I revealed that despite the intense transformation Chilean society has experienced since the neoliberal turn in the 1970s and 1980s, there is still a persistent

⁸² These gender gaps often go hand in hand with pay gaps. In medicine, for instance, a gender pay gap exists among those located at the top of the income scale (Vargas *et al.*, 2015, p. 128); however, compared with law (Bravo *et al.*, 2008) or engineering (Cofré, 2018), this disparity is small (Zimmerman, 2019b). In engineering, a woman occupying a deputy management position in 2013 received 10 percent less salary than a man in the same position—a gap that was reduced to 6 percent less in 2018 (Cofré, 2018, p. 6, 8).

trend towards restrictive mobility at the upper echelons of society, and especially so for women from disadvantaged origins. More specifically, I showed how both UCH and PUC, the oldest and most prestigious universities in the nation, remained the fabrics in the making of the elites and in offering opportunities for meritocratic mobility. This happens, I argued, chiefly because these are long-lasting institutions backed by power and cultural legitimacy, thus consolidating their leading positions in the Chilean educational field. I also indicated—an aspect largely glossed over within existing research on social stratification and mobility—how elite professions have shifted their traditional identities from the public to the private sector. As such, this chapter offers the main background for the subsequent analysis of my empirical material in Part II of this thesis.

Chapter 4.

Researching the Experience of Long-Range Upward Mobility in Contemporary Chile

Introduction

The methodological options to address social mobility and its associated experience are not self-evident. Mainstream mobility research relies almost exclusively on the use of survey data and formal models (Hout and DiPrete, 2006). Studies tackling the experiential dimensions of mobility, by contrast, use qualitative methods—either interviews, participant observation, or a combination of both—and provide rich descriptive accounts (e.g., Jackson and Marsden, 1963; Sennett and Cobb, 1972; Skeggs, 1997a). In recent years, scholars have foregrounded the role that cultural processes play in both the reproduction and change of inequality across generations (Small *et al.*, 2010; Wilson, 2010). These scholars argue that an essential first step in the study of complex cultural and meaning-making processes is to focus on the micro-level discourses or practices constituting them (Lamont *et al.*, 2014, p. 597).

This is the approach that I make my own in the study of the experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. Yet if my methodological starting-point is the micro-level narratives or practices of actors themselves, it is also one recognising that individuals' lives unfold as part of the broader web of organisations and institutions in which they are embedded (Lamont *et al.*, 2014, pp. 584-5). Indeed, organisations and institutions such as families, schools, and high-status occupations, as I outlined in Chapter 2 and showed in Chapter 3, play a crucial role in both the reproduction of inequality and mobility processes. In studying the experience of long-range upward mobility in the Chilean context, I therefore

examine the micro-level discourses or practices of the actors themselves, but always in connection to the wider organisations and institutions shaping them.

Such an approach also needs to address issues of reflexivity and positionality. Over the past decades, under the combined influence of cultural studies (Hoggart, 2009[1957]; Hall, 2006[1996]) and feminist epistemology (Harding, 1986), reflexivity and self-positionality have become central concerns in qualitative research. These concerns stem from the significant recognition that perception and thus knowledge are always tied to a concrete position that the researcher occupies in the world—one which inevitably gives the epistemic subject a particular rather than a general viewpoint. By becoming aware of one's intellectual, political, and personal 'baggage', researchers can not only reflect on the impact of their presence and actions on the nature and extent of the empirical material they collect and analyse, but also—and crucially—enhance ethically grounded research. These considerations occupy a prominent place in this thesis.

In this chapter, I address the methodological decisions and self-positionality issues behind this research. Acknowledging that situated experience and standpoints matter for the practice of research, I provide both an account and reflections of the methodological choices involved in my study of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. I present and discuss the whole research process, including considerations about family history and positionality, the definition of the sample, establishing trust and negotiating access, the analytical and interpretative process of my empirical material, the risks and ethical dilemmas involved, and the main limitations of this study. This chapter thus offers the methodological underpinnings of the empirical material and analysis presented in Part II of this thesis.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I outline how my family history and personal background have given shape to my multigenerational approach to mobility, positionality, and epistemological standpoint. Secondly, I offer my working definition of long-range upward mobility and an account of my sampling strategy. Thirdly, I discuss the nature of my empirical material, data-gathering techniques, and the main features of the data collected. Fourthly, I address issues of access and trust concerning key gatekeepers and participants. Fifthly, I draw out the analytical process, explaining the rationale behind my analysis and reflecting upon key interpretative challenges. Sixthly, I discuss the main ethics and risks associated with my research. Seventhly, I tackle the chief limitations of this study. Finally, I deliver some concluding remarks.

Multigenerational Mobility, Positionality, and Epistemological Standpoint

My grandfather's long-range upward trajectory—as I noted in the Preface—has not only been the driving personal inspiration behind this research, but also a crucial influence in shaping my approach to social mobility and positionality as a researcher. My grandfather's social ascent occupied a central position during my upbringing. Becoming a lawyer from PUC in the 1960s was part of a larger story of the vital role of education, hard work, and the resulting reward for effort within my family narrative. As my grandfather grew old amid an economic prosperity in stark contrast with his own humble origins, all his children and grandchildren were privately educated and later reached elite universities.⁸³ By the early

⁸³ Early in life I lived in the same small town in which my grandparents settled in the 1960s with my father, an engineer, and my mother, a pharmaceutical chemist (both graduates from UCH). But seeking to make the most of my educational opportunities, my parents moved to Santiago, where the schools were better and the possibilities for me and my siblings were greater. In the 1990s and early 2000s, echoing wider trends in education in Chile, I attended private schools: first an 'alternative' German primary school and then a French secondary school. Although neither of these schools were part of the handful of educational establishments historically

1990s, the status of my family, both nuclear and extended, was part of the upper middle class—at any rate by Chilean standards. My grandfather had good reasons to feel proud of his meritocratic achievements and those of his offspring.

Yet, in reality, my grandfather's meritocratic success was accompanied by a mixture of pride with stubborn feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. I became gradually aware of this at the time of my grandfather's retirement, when he allowed himself to be more open about this less well-known facet of his life. What emerged from our conversations was the lasting force of the inequalities shaping my grandfather's experience of long-range upward mobility—inequalities persistently influencing a displaced sense of social belonging and self-identification. In turn, these conversations galvanised both my interest in multigenerational family histories and my increasing awareness of inequality and its lingering impacts. That interest and awareness, as time went by, remained an aggravating curiosity.

To a large extent, that curiosity drove me to choose sociology as a field of study. My undergraduate years at PUC were flanked by the forceful rise of nationwide student movements: first the secondary student protests in 2006 and later the even bigger university student demonstrations in 2011—until then the largest expressions of discontent since the recovery of democracy in 1990.⁸⁴ These massive social movements spurred a strong critique of both the neoliberal order imposed by Pinochet's dictatorship and continued by the political establishment overseeing the transition to democracy, and an unequal, low-quality, and highly privatised educational system—which increased access, but generated a mass of

training Chile's elites, both belonged to a rather exclusive network of private schooling—a privilege available to less than 10 percent of the Chilean population (more on this in Chapter 6).

⁸⁴ Both of these social movements have been largely overshadowed by the dramatic wave of social unrest which started on October 18, 2019. What at first began as a secondary school student protest rejecting a hike in metro fares in the capital city, Santiago, rapidly turned into a nationwide popular revolt against Sebastián Piñera's right-wing government and neoliberal order imposed by Pinochet five decades ago.

debtors and thwarted their dreams of upward mobility. Like almost everyone in my generation, I was deeply touched by and involved with these student revolts, which demanded a fairer, high-quality, and public-based educational system.

It was the shared insistence on education, inequality, and social mobility that brought students' unrest and the story of my grandfather together. I became gradually interested in issues of upward mobility in a society with stubbornly high levels of inequality despite all the educational opportunities generated in recent decades. By the early 2000s, both for mainstream commentators and policymakers (e.g., Brunner *et al.*, 2005; Brunner 2009; Engel and Navia, 2006; Sapelli, 2016), upward mobility via higher education became a crucial pointer of a fairer society. Yet as the experience of my grandfather and my own thus far suggested, attendance at a few select universities and studying particular academic programmes continued to be a potent factor in shaping both class reproduction and possibilities of upward mobility.

Although I was not fully aware of it at the time, this intuition echoed well-established sociological insights. Beyond the appearance of greater openness, the inequalities shaping the educational system move forward, but are maintained at the same time: the disadvantaged classes believe they are accessing what they were previously excluded from; but when they do, the credentials acquired have lost much of the value they had in an earlier period. Marginalisation takes place at a slower pace, exclusion occurs later in the educational process; but the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged remains almost unaffected—a phenomenon termed by Bourdieu (1984 [1979], pp. 153ff) as the 'displacement of the structure' (see also Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970, p. 90, 102, 222 and Lucas, 2001).

In the ensuing years, as the student movement waned and the conversations with my grandfather went on, I became more and more interested in better understanding the complicated and protracted (re)production of inequality across generations. In line with Mare's (2011) call for the development of a multigenerational research agenda, my grandfather's long-range upward trajectory highlighted the limitations of conceiving mobility solely in terms of the relationship between parents and children. This narrow focus on a two-generation association model overlooks the very real influence of the multiple resources (cultural, social, and economic) passed on across more than two generations, as well as the impacts of that wider temporal process in terms of class identifications. As my dialogue with my grandfather pointed to, much of all that was premised on broader multigenerational family (hi)stories, which needed to become more central issues in mobility analysis.

But my family background not only made rethink mobility from a wider multigenerational perspective. It also made me study inequality and mobility from a particular epistemological standpoint. Mine was neither a position of withdrawn aloofness—Lévi-Strauss's (1983) famous '*regard éloigné*'—nor one based on common experience—Shamus Kahn's (2011) insider-researcher. Rather, having inherited a family identity built around a long-range upward trajectory but without experiencing that trajectory myself, my positionality required careful and ongoing thought about my own identity as a researcher. In that process, as I go on to explain now, I was continually challenged to (re)think about the potential and actual difficulties of forging connections across lines of class, gender, and power in contemporary Chile.

Long-range Upward Mobility and Sample

In sociology, as I noted in Chapter 2, social mobility has traditionally been conceptualised and measured using occupation as the main variable to define the class of origin and destination (Hout and DiPrete, 2006). In Chile, however, occupation alone is insufficient to account for people's class belongings or transitions (Espinoza and Barozet, 2009). Although less pronounced than in the rest of Latin America, Chile presents a substantial level of occupational informality, reaching almost a third of the labour force (Henríquez, 2019, p. 14; see also ECLAC/IWO, 2019). This complicates the use of occupation—as adopted by Goldthorpe's classic class schema—as the main variable to define upward mobility, especially in the definition of the class of origin. In Chile, as in much of Latin America, holding a university degree constitutes the best predictor of high socioeconomic status (e.g., Morley, 2001; Psacharopoulos, 1994; Torche, 2005a).

In delineating a *long-range upward trajectory* in my study, I therefore use a combination of variables: education and occupation. The *class of origin* was defined by parents holding a (i) primary or secondary degree but not one from higher education and who (ii) work(ed) in the informal economy, blue-collar, or low-status white-collar jobs. The *class of destination* was defined by men and women having a (i) university degree in high-status occupations and (ii) at least five years of work experience since their graduation (for a detailed account, see Table I).⁸⁵

Following these selection criteria, I built my sample from July 2017 to August 2018. The sample was composed by first-generation professionals who undertook their undergraduate

⁸⁵ Although mindful of the multigenerational making of mobility, I did not include this variable in the definition of a long-range upward trajectory. This was largely because of the practical difficulties in implementing it as a selection criterion for my sample.

studies at Chile's elite universities: UCH and PUC. Both of these academic institutions, as I showed in Chapter 3, are the most selective universities in the country and constitute vital channels to subsequently achieve influential positions in society. Participants in this research undertook undergraduate studies in law, medicine, and engineering—the most prestigious occupations in Chile (UNDP, 2017). In my sampling strategy, I also divided participants in terms of their alma mater, their high-status professions (20 medical doctors, 20 engineers⁸⁶, and 20 lawyers), and their gender.

A third of the interviewees came from single-parent families, though many more experienced significant forms of family disruption. Significantly, half of interviewees grew up with grandparents and other extended kin (some of them having a few years of higher education, even if their parents did not), which played an important role in their childhood or adolescence (see Chapter 5). Most of their parents held multiple jobs over their life-course, many moving from informal to formal employment and vice versa.⁸⁷ Although almost all participants had religious upbringings, not many practice religion—either Catholic or evangelical—as adults. Very few grew up in families with a non-Spanish European background: some can be considered 'white', but most of them had visible ethnic signs of miscegenation. The participants came from diverse political backgrounds; some reported important shifts in this regard tied to their upward trajectories. All of them were educated either in state schools (both ordinary state-schools or *liceos emblemáticos*) or the more recently created voucher schools (more on this in Chapter 6).

⁸⁶ Commercial engineers are included among the engineers I interviewed, though they are not many (see Table I)

⁸⁷ In Chapter 5, I explore the multiple jobs the grandparents and parents of my participants held throughout their working lives. There I delve deeper into the heterogeneous and often precarious working conditions of the forebears of interviewees, a condition heightened by the deregulation and flexibilisation triggered by the neoliberal reforms implemented since the 1970s and 1980s (Sehnbruch, 2006).

Table I: Description of Sample

Name	Birth	Gender	University	Occupation	Degree	Father Education	Mother Education	Father Occupation	Mother Occupation
Pablo	1989	M	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE**	Complete SE	Factory worker	Housewife
Marcelo	1988	M	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Gardener°	Housewife/cleaner°
Pedro	1988	M	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Incomplete TE***	Incomplete PE*	Schoolteacher	Domestic servant
Martín	1990	M	UCH	Lawyer	BA	No Information	Complete SE	No information	Rural worker°
Daniel	1984	M	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Incomplete SE	Incomplete PE	Policeman	Housewife
Paula	1983	F	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Incomplete PE	Chauffeur	Housewife/secretary
Alejandra	1980	F	UCH	Lawyer	MA	Incomplete SE	Complete TE	Journalist	Housewife/secretary
Astrid	1980	F	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Set designer°	Housewife/secretary
Marta	1967	F	UCH	Lawyer	MA	Incomplete PE	Complete PE	Mechanic°	Housewife
Marcela	1988	F	UCH	Lawyer	BA	Incomplete SE	Complete SE	Typographer	Housewife/Typographer
Miguel	1982	M	PUC	Lawyer	MA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Retail seller°	Retail seller°
Mario	1984	M	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Marine	Housewife/secretary
Jorge	1985	M	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Complete PE	Builder°	Cleaner
Juan	1982	M	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Incomplete SE	Policeman	Housewife
Matías	1981	M	PUC	Lawyer	MA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Mechanic°	Nursery assistant
Carolina	1984	F	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Bus driver°	Housewife
Catherine	1983	F	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Small businessman	Housewife
Pamela	1983	F	PUC	Lawyer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Factory worker°	Housewife°
Rosa	1984	F	PUC	Lawyer	MA	Incomplete SE	Complete SE	Junior	Housewife
Amparo	1985	F	PUC	Lawyer	PhD ©	Complete SE	Complete SE	Manager	Low-status manager

Notes: All names are pseudonyms. M: Male. F: Female.. *PE: Primary Education; ** SE: Secondary Education; ***TE: Tertiary Education. °Indicates main occupation among several

Table I: Description of Sample (*continued*)

Name	Birth	Gender	University	Occupation	Degree	Father Education	Mother Education	Father Occupation	Mother Occupation
Javier	1961	M	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE**	Incomplete PE*	Taylor°	Housewife/cleaner °
Alberto	1953	M	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE	Incomplete PE	Sergeant°	Housewife/cleaner°
Rafael	1957	M	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete PE	Complete PE	Cook/junior	Housewife
Carlos	1960	M	UCH	Doctor	MA†	Complete SE	Complete TE***	Builder	Secretary°
Patricio	1985	M	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE	Complete SE	Junior	Housewife
Estefanía	1971	F	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE	Incomplete PE	Salesman	Saleswoman
Silvana	1960	F	UCH	Doctor	BA	Complete SE	Incomplete PE	Electrician	Housewife
Laura	1957	F	UCH	Doctor	BA	Incomplete SE	Incomplete PE	Baker	Housewife
Jessica	1956	F	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE	Complete SE	Typographer	Housewife
Carmen	1986	F	UCH	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete SE	Complete SE	Factory worker°	Housewife
Sebastián	1985	M	PUC	Doctor	PhD©	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Mechanic	Housewife°
Tomás	1984	M	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete SE	Incomplete TE	Welder°	Housewife
Benjamín	1992	M	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Complete PE	Complete SE	Welder	Dressmaker
Esteban	1984	M	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete PE	Incomplete SE	Gardener	Housewife
Roberto	1951	M	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Janitor°	Housewife/waitress
Inéz	1985	F	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete TE	Incomplete SE	Mechanic°	Housewife°
María	1988	F	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Complete SE	Complete TE	Bank junior	Housewife/secretary
Doris	1985	F	PUC	Doctor	BA†	Incomplete TE	Complete SE	Mechanic°	Housewife
Andrea	1967	F	PUC	Doctor	MA†	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Hairdresser	Housewife
Milena	1970	F	UV/PUC	Doctor	BA†	Complete PE	Complete SE	Builder	Dressmaker

Notes: All names are pseudonyms. M: Male. F: Female. UV: Universidad de Valparaíso. *PE: Primary Education; ** SE: Secondary Education; ***TE: Tertiary Education. † Indicates medical specialty °Indicates main occupation among several.

Table I: Description of Sample (*continued*)

Name	Birth	Gender	University	Occupation	Degree	Father Education	Mother Education	Father Occupation	Mother Occupation
Rodrigo	1975	M	UCH	Engineer	BA	Incomplete SE**	Incomplete SE	Bus Driver ^o	Housewife/secretary
Fernando	1965	M	UCH	Economist	PhD	Incomplete SE	Complete PE*	Builder ^o	Housewife
Gustavo	1974	M	UCH	Comm. Eng	MA	Incomplete PE	Incomplete PE	Waitress	Housewife/waitress
Gabriel	1956	M	UCH	Comm. Eng	BA	Incomplete SE	Incomplete SE	Draftsman	Housewife
Nicolás	1988	M	UCH	Engineer	BA	Complete PE	Incomplete PE	Builder	Housewife
Loreto	1972	F	UCH	Engineer	BA	Incomplete PE	Incomplete PE	Carpenter	Housewife/saleswoman
Francisca	1976	F	UCH	Engineer	BA	Incomplete PE	Complete SE	Security guard ^o	Housewife
Sofía	1985	F	UCH	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Salesman ^o	Housewife/technician
Marcia	1985	F	UCH	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete PE	Builder ^o	Housewife
Ana	1984	F	UCH	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete PE	Small entrepreneur	Housewife
Antonio	1974	M	UA/PUC	Engineer	MA/MBA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Fisherman ^o	Housewife/fisherwoman ^o
Jaime	1984	M	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Salesman	Waitress
Guillermo	1984	M	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete PE	Goldsmith ^o	Secretary
Diego	1984	M	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Salesman	Housewife/secretary
Cristian	1984	M	PUC	Engineer	MA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Junior in the army	Housewife/clerk bank
Javiera	1984	F	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Mechanic	Secretary
Fernanda	1984	F	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete TE***	Complete SE	Civil servant	Housewife
Cristina	1983	F	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete TE	Journalist	Housewife/secretary
Daniela	1982	F	PUC	Engineer	BA	No Information	Complete SE	No Information	Manager at restaurant ^o
Ximena	1982	F	PUC	Engineer	BA	Complete SE	Complete SE	Bank clerk	Bank clerk

Notes: All names are pseudonyms. M: Male. F: Female. UA: Universidad de Atacama. *PE: Primary Education; ** SE: Secondary Education; ***TE: Tertiary Education. ^oIndicates main occupation among several.

The bulk of participants were in their 30s and 40s, although some—especially doctors—were in their 50s and 60s. While almost a third had origins in the provinces, most live in the capital, Santiago. Many reside in the better-off neighbourhoods in Santiago, though this does not amount to the majority of them, particularly younger generations. A very small minority live in other cities or abroad. All participants, except for one female interviewee, were formally employed. Five men have occupied in the past or currently occupy senior positions in their work. Unlike the majority of their mothers, all female participants have worked or currently work for a salary, but only two were employed in a senior position. Fifteen hold a master's degree awarded in Chile and/or overseas, but only three had doctoral studies—and only one of them had completed his doctoral programme. Almost all declared they were in touch with their families of origin or support them financially (see Chapter 8 and 9). Ten lived with a parent or older family member such as an aunt or a grandmother at the time of our interview. Three-quarters of the participants were married, five remained single, and three were divorced. Two thirds have children.

Interviews, Participant Observation, and Administrative Data

My empirical material is essentially comprised by 60 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. I put in practice a particular type of interview oriented to the analysis of biography and personal trajectory over the life-course: *life-story interviews* (Bertaux, 1989). This kind of interview is particularly suited to address both the diachronic dimension of mobility and the personal interpretations tied to this process (Bertaux and Thompson, 1997). After conducting five pilot interviews, I developed an interview schedule using both existing research on social class and culture, and an open and grounded approach to my research subject (see Appendix III). The main focus of the interviews was on how the long-range

upwardly mobile themselves understand and make sense of their unlikely upward trajectories in the Chilean context.

The interviews covered a wide arrange of topics from the interviewees' family history to their current lives as first-generation professionals: their family background, childhoods, schooling, university training, transition to the labour market, work experience, choice of residence, partners, and the schooling of their own children (where applicable). Significantly, influenced by the story of my grandfather, I included questions about grandparents and other extended kin—and not just the parents—of my interviewees. I asked both directive and non-directive questions, inquiring about the specific meaning of certain people and circumstances, but also making room for my interviewees to express themselves in their own terms (e.g., Weiss, 1995). All interviews were conducted in Spanish (see Appendix II).

In spite of the advantages of life-story interviews, they risk creating too much consistency in narratives. I deployed two strategies to diminish the potentially distorting impacts of this risk. Firstly, I approached interviewees by paying particular attention to sensitive, conflicting, or troubling topics in their accounts. Focusing on the gaps between meaning and expression (Sennett, 2010, pp. 18-19) or the emotional tensions contained in language (Pugh, 2013, pp. 56-61), I repeatedly asked clarification questions, via prompts, follow-up questions, and probing on the significance accorded to specific topics or happenings. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, I conducted more than half of the interviews in more than one session. The time span separating each session gave both the interviewees and myself the chance to reflect upon what had been said before (Charmaz, 2003), introducing a considerable amount of reflexivity to our conversations and disrupting the consistency otherwise inherent to chronological accounts.

Interviews took place at the time and location of the participants' choosing, and this mattered for the type of data I collected. On average, interviews took three hours, although one of them lasted more than five hours and one was slightly longer than one hour. It was the long duration of interviews that allowed me to cover the vast array of themes addressed with the interviewees. The location of the interview was also relevant for the quality of my data. All of the interviews, except for two⁸⁸, were conducted in Santiago, including a range of places such as participants' homes (9), workplaces (11), coffeehouses (33), or online via Skype (7). In their homes, I was able to meet and interact with their spouses or partners and/or offspring; in many cases relatives intervened in our conversation and offered additional insights and observations: sometimes confirming, complementing, or dissenting with the account provided by the interviewee. In their workplaces, I was able to see participants interact with their colleagues, including superiors and subordinates. All of this contextual richness delivered by the access to more intimate settings was clearly less available when interviews took place in coffeehouses or via Skype.

Interviews also opened the door to conduct *participant observation* with three male interviewees.⁸⁹ The first chance to perform participant observation occurred with a medical doctor whom I had interviewed early in my fieldwork. He invited me to have tea and biscuits along with his wife, mother, and siblings at a family gathering which lasted for more than four hours. In the other two cases, I asked a lawyer and an engineer if I could visit their families/neighbourhoods of origin. Both agreed. The lawyer invited me to his flat, while his mother and grandmother—who lived in a small town on the outskirts of Santiago—were there on a weekly visit; on that occasion I had the opportunity to meet them and his girlfriend

⁸⁸ One of these was conducted in the town located on the central coast, the place in which the participant resided. The other was conducted in London, where the informant was carrying out doctoral studies.

⁸⁹ A female medical doctor agreed that I meet her nuclear family and possibly also her extended family afterwards but, in the end, this did not take place.

for a conversation that lasted for two hours. The engineer took me for a lengthy Sunday lunch—spanning for more than five hours—with his mother and elder sister in the impoverished neighbourhood in which he was brought up.

Conducting participant observation offered valuable insights which were not fully discernible from interviews. My interviews suggested a strong feeling of attachment towards their families of origin, and expressed in regular financial support and visits to both nuclear and extended kin. Participant observation revealed how this attachment operated in practice. The case of the engineer was very telling. On our way to his childhood home, we stopped at a nearby *feria* (street market) to do some shopping. As we bought meat and vegetables, he explained to me that ‘every week I buy for myself and for my mother. And every Sunday, almost without exception, I visit my mother and sister and leave with them the food I buy’—an important element which he did not mention during our interview. This led me to give much greater attention to the significance of the attachment and support my participants provided to their families of origin (for a wider discussion on this topic, see Chapter 9).

In addition to interviews and participation, a final data source for this research is administrative data. I used the dataset created by the Department of Evaluation, Measurement and Educational Registration (DEMRE by its Spanish acronym). This dataset contains rich information about students (and their families) taking the ‘Prueba de Selección Universitaria’ (University Selection Test)—the national standardised examination granting access to higher education—from 2004 to 2014. I drew on parents’ level of education (as proxy of social class) to address the enrolment of first-generation students in law, medicine, and engineering at UCH and PUC. In Chapter 7, I use this data to contextualise the experience of interviewees in the most coveted and selective academic programmes in Chile..

Establishing Trust and Negotiating Access

Establishing trust was crucial for negotiating access in my research project. In order to reach potential participants, I sought the institutional support of UCH and PUC. At first, I formally requested that the authorities at both of these institutions identify former students meeting the selection criteria and invite them to participate in my research. When approaching key gatekeepers, I was completely honest about my research project—‘to understand the experience of social mobility among former students of high-status occupations’—and how I would achieve it—by interviewing them. However, negotiating access was both time-consuming and cumbersome. Arranging meetings with gatekeepers took months, depending on their perception of my research project and each institution’s formal and informal rules of operation.

At PUC, referrals and my prior undergraduate studies there were helpful in eliciting a favourable attitude from authorities to collaborate with my research.⁹⁰ At UCH, however, gaining access was more challenging. Unlike PUC, UCH is organised in a highly decentralised way, which meant that I had to negotiate access with each faculty separately. I managed to obtain the formal approval and cooperation of all the faculties except medicine. In this case, I reached participants using word of mouth and snowball sampling. With the support of UCH and PUC, I recruited the initial participants in my sample (25 interviews). I filled the remaining gaps by using a snowball sampling technique (35 interviews). Snowball sampling proved more effective because potential interviewees were more likely to participate if a friend or acquaintance recommended me. With the exception of two interviewees, I did not interview anyone I knew personally.

⁹⁰ A group particularly difficult to reach were male doctors from PUC. All of them were recruited via snowball sampling.

Establishing trust with the interviewees was equally vital. I was aware that, despite my interest in studying long-range upward mobility, my positionality did not equate to having similar life experiences with my potential interviewees, or enable a strong rapport, or a more ethical analysis or understanding of their lives (Mellor *et al.*, 2014). Early on in my fieldwork, I took the decision of sharing with participants the story of my grandfather as the main source of personal inspiration behind my research. Disclosing this story to interviewees allowed me to position myself and earn their trust in my research project and myself as a researcher, as this gave me both a sense of closeness and distance. A sense of *closeness* as I shared my own family background with them. In practice, this primed common ground to build a rapport with the participants—indispensable for generating rich qualitative data (Lamont, 1992; Fontana and Frey, 2005).

But my own family background also positioned me at a certain *distance* from interviewees, as I had clearly not experienced the same long-range upward trajectory as they did. The gap between our disparate social locations galvanised further inquiries into diverse, not always anticipated, directions. For some interviewees, for instance, my experience as a doctoral student at a prestigious foreign university sparked their interest and served as a contrast, steering the conversation towards the difficulties many first-generation students face in pursuing post-graduate training (for more on this, see Chapter 8). For me, it allowed me to inquire further about some of the taken-for-granted assumptions my interviewees often brought up in their narratives (e.g., variations of sentences that start with an off-handed ‘you know’, or when they assumed that I had interpreted an event the same way as they did).

Like my conversations with my grandfather, interviews were loaded with strong emotions. Most interviews shifted between moments of high emotional tension to others of ease,

including amusement or even laughter. Others retained a less intense but lingering emotional strain throughout. Here gender mattered significantly. When confronted with challenging emotions, male interviewees tended to adopt distancing attitudes such as silence, use of the third person, or exaggerated rationality as a means of navigating our conversation.⁹¹ Female participants, by contrast, were much more open to express and dwell on their emotions; revealingly, unlike men, women allowed themselves to cry in front of me.⁹² Many interviewees, acknowledging the opportunity to convey their emotional experiences to someone who would listen, referred to the interviews as a form of therapy.⁹³ Others pointed out that our conversations had made them think about issues that they had never thought about or dared to share before. Thus, despite their fears of incomprehension, the wishes to leave a troubling past behind, or a haunting sense of *pudeur*, what amply prevailed was their willingness to share their stories.

Analysis and Interpretative Challenges

During the early stages of my fieldwork, I began the process of transcribing the recorded material. After conducting each interview, based on my notes, I wrote down a summary highlighting the key life events of each interviewee. After each ethnographic visit, I recorded a detailed account of the day's interactions, conversations, and settings. The transcription of the tape-recorded interviews was a lengthy, often exhausting process. As I wanted to be as close to the empirical material as possible, I devoted a lot of time to listening to the audio-

⁹¹ With many male participants these attitudes allowed them to 'abstract their feelings' (Messner, 1992, p. 178), or to deflect unsettling topics. In two cases, interviewees explicitly asked me to avoid talking about particularly difficult issues for them, which I respected.

⁹² When this occurred, I remained in silence for a while, and later asked them if they wanted to continue the interview after a pause, or stop it altogether. All participants opted for the former alternative.

⁹³ Other scholars have also reported this (see Jack, 2019, p. 211, and Pasquali, 2014, p. 313).

taped recordings and the slow process of writing down interviews verbatim. Some people helped me with this, but I did a significant amount myself. After everything was down on paper, the written recorded material spanned slightly over three thousand and five hundred pages. Collected, these conversations and observations make up my empirical material.

While still conducting interviews, I began the analysis of my empirical material. Following the recommendations of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 2012 [1967]; Strauss, 1987), I emphasised careful work with the data, undertaking systematic coding of the interviews and field notes. Using the Nvivo (Version 11) software, this involved a time-consuming process of line-by-line coding, whereby codes were given to each segment of the data—each sentence, statement, and paragraph. Initially, this analytical procedure was helpful and gave me a concrete sense of ‘what was happening in the data’. But as I continued the process of manually coding hundreds of pages, this procedure proved increasingly disappointing to make sense of my data in a broader, meaningful way. By the time I finished coding my 10th interview, I felt frustrated and incapable of thinking through the data in analytically fruitful terms.

My difficulties in making sense of my empirical material were largely due to the fact that it was riddled with complexity and ambiguity. Many interviews, for instance, conveyed both individual and collective framings shaping the narratives of their long-range upward mobility. Sometimes, an interviewee would emphasise his individual talents and efforts behind his upward trajectory. In other passages, however, the same interviewee could provide a strong collective framing of their upward trajectory by acknowledging the key intervention or significance of external figures. This oscillation was not uncommon, both within and across interviews. Most likely, it reflects how people often mobilise competing or even contradictory

logics when making sense of their lives—superimposing new cultural models onto older ones (e.g., Swidler, 1986)

In light of the knottiness and multiplicity of meanings contained in my data, I abandoned my initial analytical strategy. Rather than primarily focusing on the line-by-line coding of statements, sentences, or quotes, I shifted my attention towards larger themes or tensions in my data. With the printed transcriptions of the interviews and field notes, I sought wider ‘clusters of meaning’ (Moustakas, 1994). I (re)read everything several times before I felt confident of identifying appropriate foci for analysis. Eventually, in a constant back-and-forth movement, extending for more than a year and a half, this approach allowed me to identify the analytically rich themes which I examine in my empirical chapters in Part II of this thesis.⁹⁴

This analytical approach also impacted my interpretative and writing-up process. For one thing, it pushed me to consider forms of data reduction of the complexity and variation contained in my empirical material as part of the wider interpretative process. In my empirical chapters, for instance, I use the illustration of chosen examples alongside broader frequency counts. This allowed me to highlight the individual examples most clearly and richly illustrating specific analytical issues, but also displaying such issues in relation to the data considered as a whole. On other occasions, particularly for the cultural repertoires reported in Chapter 5, I also relied on a wider triangulation between my empirical material and historical evidence. This triangulation allowed me to create a clearer dialogue between the accounts I collected and scholarly sources. In any case, as much as I could, I tried to create

⁹⁴ In practice, leaving behind my first analytical strategy also implied abandoning the use of Nvivo, as the use of this software was not facilitating my analytical and interpretative process. This is not to say that the use of Nvivo cannot be a fruitful analytical tool—far from it; it only means that, for me, it was not helpful in making sense of my empirical material, and I pragmatically opted not to use it more.

an ‘open’ rather than ‘closed’ text by encouraging readers to spot the plots buried in my own stories of the men and women I interviewed and to formulate their own questions about their knottiness.

Nevertheless, many challenging questions remained open concerning my analysis and interpretation. A first interpretative challenge relates to the role of memory in my empirical material. As I knew from my conversations with my grandfather, my interviews were built by acts of memory. Some of them—the reminiscences of grandparents, for instance—involved recollections rooted in the distant past of my interviewees’ lives, and were often infused with obscurity or fuzziness. An account of a life and life itself are never the same thing, and the gaps—wider or narrower—between them are inevitably in the interest of each. Should I not, as a researcher, be wary of the structuring power that comes with hindsight (Bourdieu, 1986b; see also Maugier, 1994; Pudal, 1994)? To what extent were my interviews an invitation to selective recall, with all the facilities of convenient or unconscious forgetfulness? It thus seems legitimate to ask not just about the inherent bias of life-story interviews to create too much consistency in retrospective accounts, but also to inquire how far memories correspond to facts.

The plain truth is that narratives are never a straightforward ‘factual’ account of the details of a person’s life. Rather, they offer a storyline, steered by a plot structure, which renders a chosen sequence of events into a more or less intelligible tale (Riceour, 1990). Importantly, in this sense, my own interpretation of the empirical material is unavoidably an analytical exercise about a reality already interpreted by each interviewee through their own recollections. And yet, even when individually exercised, memory is collectively ‘framed’ (Halbwachs (1994[1925]): the personal practice of memory is always part of larger social practices, collectively organised forms of remembrance. The latter, that of the group or class

to which one belongs or identifies with, constitutes the condition of the memory practiced by individuals through ongoing interactions, and fixed in time via memorials, rites, and ceremonies. But memories, both individual and collective, are also plural in their diverse manifestations and change across time. They are developed in multiple, heterogeneous spaces and temporalities, varying within and between societies. In light of this, I have pragmatically taken the memories conveyed in interviews as a medium to explore the internal logic of the script as produced at the time at which the interviews were conducted, but also as the best access I could get to participants' lived-experience at different moments in time.

What, then, is the nature of the memories articulated in my empirical material? The analytical process led me to consider some of them through the lens of what historian Steve Stern (2010, p. 10, 195, 261) calls 'emblematic memories': shared narratives to which interviewees connect their personal experiences as part of a socially legitimised account.⁹⁵ In this vein, my findings conveyed a strong emphasis and value of education and effort—to take only two prominent, analytically rich themes. These motives, widely shared in Chilean society (Fontaine and Urzúa, 2018), can thus be seen as emblematic memories at work among my interviewees. Yet if my findings support this conventional depiction of Chilean society, they also reveal a plurality of meanings and experiences—often painful and disrupting—about education and effort (see Chapter 5 and 6). My interviews thus uncover memories about both legitimised forms of social recognition and more sensitive, conflicting, or troubling, experiences tied to their long-range upward trajectories.

⁹⁵ I express my thanks to Marcelo Casals for drawing my attention to both Stern's work and this line of interpretation of my findings. The book to which I am referring here, *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989–2006*, is part of a larger trilogy in which Stern, building from the work of Maurice Halbwachs, studies memories of trauma and political violence in contemporary Chilean society.

Another interpretative challenge concerns the key issue of translation. I have been continually confronted, especially in the writing-up process, with the central question of language as a means of conveying meaning. With empirical material saturated by idiosyncratic linguistic expressions in Spanish and theoretical ideas articulated mainly in English, my analysis has been a constant engagement across linguistic boundaries. Yet semantic similarities across languages cannot be taken for granted. They emerge in specific historical circumstances that shape language in specific ways, disrupting how the compatibility of meaning comes about and is maintained between different linguistic communities (Wigen, 2018).⁹⁶ As such, the risks involved in translation are twofold: the first arises from the potential diversion of meaning between my informants and my own interpretation; the second occurs in the crossing of linguistic boundaries from Spanish to English.

The notion of '*flaite*', to choose one among many, serves to illustrate the point at hand. This pejorative term—alluding to young people from lower-class backgrounds characterised by both a defiant attitude towards authority and showy consumption—was often used by interviewees (see Chapter 6). In many respects, *flaite* can be quite close to the English expression '*chav*'. But although making this semantic equivalence was tempting, this straightforward translation misses a key difference: while in Britain the figure of the *chav* generally refers to the white poor, in Chile *flaite* is usually identified with someone with pronounced ethnic signs of miscegenation, in sharp contrast to the white phenotype of the upper classes. Taking semantic discrepancies like this into account, I have opted to retain all the relevant idiosyncratic utterances in Spanish throughout my writing, suggesting in parentheses the closest meaning in English I could find.

⁹⁶ I owe this reference and a thought-provoking conversation about language and translation to Olivia Nantermoz.

Ethics and Risks

Since the early stages of my research, issues of consent and confidentiality were very important, and I took them as such. I approached my fieldwork prioritising trust and integrity at all times. This shaped how I negotiated access to potential participants with key gatekeepers at both UCH and PUC. At the latter institution, as already noted, my whole research project had to pass their own ethical standards and be approved before they agree to collaborate with me. Negotiating consent relied on respondents believing and trusting my explanation for what I was doing. When approaching interviewees, I gave a clear and concise summary of my research background and aims. Before interviews took place, a written informed consent was signed by each interviewee (see appendix II).⁹⁷ I anonymised interviews and gave each interviewee a pseudonym. While conducting participant observation, I often reminded participants that my observations were also part of my research and potentially subject to public disclosure. For much of the time involved in the fieldwork, I thought these safeguards were sound.

As my research advanced beyond the fieldwork, however, I soon discovered that these precautions were not sufficient. By the time I reached the analysis and writing-up process, I realised that respecting confidentiality was not as easy as I had at first believed. When describing sensitive issues for participants (e.g., accounting for a troubling relationship with a boss at work), guaranteeing confidentiality could not be solved simply by finding the right pseudonym for each interviewee. On these occasions, preserving anonymity demanded more significant camouflaging; not merely giving fictitious names to those studied, but also

⁹⁷ Two lawyers remarked that the informed consent provided had no legal implications. Still, once that note was made, both agreed to participate in my research. A doctor, one of my first interviewees, noted some minor grammatical errors in the written informed consent, which I subsequently corrected.

providing some misleading information preventing others (e.g., boss, co-workers, family members) from identifying them. For instance, in work settings in which people from disadvantaged backgrounds are a visible minority, any full physical description of informants could easily reveal their identities to colleagues—something particularly sensitive for those working at UCH or PUC. Yet in obscuring their true identities to maintain their anonymity, sometimes in not entirely inconsequential ways, my equally significant commitment to remain truthful in the report of their lives was somewhat undermined. Whenever confronted with this specific dilemma, I have opted to preserve the anonymity of participants. As I came to realise, ethical compromises of this sort seem inevitable.

Ethical dilemmas are not only limited to the conflicting demands between confidentiality and truthful reporting. Perhaps even more importantly they also concern how I, as a researcher, represent and give voice to participants' intricate experiences—thus connecting ethical questions with the risks and responsibilities of interpretation (Skeggs, 1997, pp. 30-1). This involved assuming a particular responsibility for the way I portray the vulnerability of participants (see Fine *et al.*, 2000). In this, I was continuously confronted with the challenge of giving voice to their undoubtable achievements, which all too often were closely tied to unsettling or painful experiences. Most participants emphasised their hard-won accomplishments, but also gave me detailed accounts of their experiences of discrimination or stigmatisation during their upward trajectories.

How could I find the right balance in my representation of the complexity inherent to their lives? On many occasions throughout the writing-up process, my representations of interviewees' voices remained selective, and a lot of complexity and nuance was circumvented. Questions like this became all the more challenging as I was aware that gender also mattered. As I have already indicated, compared with their male counterparts, my female

interviewees showed a much more open disposition to both dwelling on difficult emotions and expressing a critical view of meritocracy. I have put my best efforts into recognising and doing justice to their stories in my analysis. But it is also important to acknowledge that I—as a young Chilean male from an upper middle-class background—had never had such experiences myself. Thus, while I am committed to sharing and highlighting their accounts, I urge readers to be especially cautious about my representations of female interviewees.

Research Limitations

While I believe the data collected and the analysis carried out during this thesis has been robust, there have been some noteworthy limitations. Most of these constraints were methodological. The first of these limitations, and probably the most significant, relates to the role of ethnicity in my study. Although an increasing body of research underscores a distinctive ‘minority culture of mobility’ (Neckerman *et al.*, 1999) based on ethnicity, both in Chile (Sepulveda, 2018) and elsewhere (Rollock *et al.*, 2014; Shahrokni, 2015), I did not include it as a formal criterion in my sampling strategy.⁹⁸ Despite this decision, ethnicity emerged as a relevant topic from my empirical material. Accordingly, I highlight the role of ethnicity throughout my empirical chapters, albeit in a less prominent way than class and gender.

A second limitation is linked to a lack of a comparative framework across different ranges of mobility within my research design. Although I included important elements of comparison

⁹⁸ The reasons for this choice were several. Some were practical. Reaching participants, as I have already pointed out, was a cumbersome and lengthy process. Both UCH and PUC, moreover, did not have any expedient way to identify the ethnicity of their alumnae. Other reasons more broadly concern the denial of racial diversity in Chile. Although the Chilean population is ethnically diverse (Rothhammer and Llop, 2004), the vast majority self-identify as white (Lizcano, 2005). This complicated using ethnicity as a formal criterion in my sampling strategy even when targeting participants via snowball sampling. Thus, in the end, I decided not to add an extra barrier by including ethnicity as an indispensable criterion for participating in my study.

within the group under study (e.g., gender, occupation, university), my research does not compare *across* groups experiencing dissimilar mobility trajectories (e.g., low-range, mid-range, or the immobile, either at the bottom or the top). Recent research suggests (Friedman and Laurison, 2019) that a comparative approach of this latter kind can very well strengthen our comprehension of both the long-range upwardly mobile themselves and other ranges of upward mobility. However, although my research design lacks a ‘control group’, it instead offers a deep understanding of the experience of *long-range* upward mobility.

A third constraint relates to the limits of my study to fully provide a diachronic account of social mobility. Even though I explored the past in the lives of interviewees at length, my research essentially offers a snapshot of their lives, inevitably coloured by the particular concerns of the present time. After the optimism that marked the self-perception of Chileans after the recovery of democracy in 1990 and lasting until the first decade of the new millennium, the nation is currently traversing a period of critical self-questioning as economic growth has declined, inequalities have persisted, and a robust public malaise has resurfaced. I believe my findings partly reflect that wider change of mood in Chilean society. Yet I also urge caution against a strong interpretation of my findings as pointers of substantial changes in the identities of my participants or in the nation as a whole, as no longitudinal design has been adopted. More longitudinal research, for instance along the lines of the one advanced by Annette Lareau (2011[2003], 2015), should be welcomed in the future.

A fourth disadvantage concerns the participant observation I managed to conduct. Although plans for further ethnographic visits were considered with the three participants with whom I conducted participant observation, this did not take place.⁹⁹ While my findings suggest that

⁹⁹ The reasons I can infer behind this are several. Despite the willingness of participants to share their stories or the enthusiasm some of them expressed to me to visit their neighbourhoods of origin together, they led fairly hectic lives and most did not live close to their families of origin anymore. Arranging meetings across

participant observation was relevant to better understand the collective meanings and tensions associated with the long-range upward trajectory for both interviewees and their families of origin, I am aware I could only scratch the surface. To this date, very few studies have undertaken participant observation in the empirical investigation of long-range upward mobility (e.g., Naudet, 2014; Pasquali, 2014). Future research, combining both interviews *and* participant observation, should provide a better empirical grounding for improving our understanding of the experience of social mobility.

All of these considerations—the role of ethnicity, the lack of a comparative framework across different ranges of mobility, the absence of a longitudinal design, and limited participant observation—highlight the question of the representativeness of the participants in this research. Strictly speaking, their narratives offer a dense and intricate portrait of how they have understood their own lives and the main institutions (families, schools, high-status occupations) shaping them. But as the embodiment of meritocratic success, I am prone to cautiously assert that their narratives also give voice to the wider aspirations, tensions, and dilemmas affecting contemporary Chile in its convoluted quest to become a modern society. To be sure, Chile's pursuit of modernity has been entangled in larger global dynamics. Yet, as I emphasised in Chapter 3, it has also been a process fashioned locally and particularly. To that locality and particularity, this research has offered the narratives of the long-range upwardly mobile.

highly distant neighbourhoods in Santiago was not an easy task. But I also suspect this was not the whole story. As my few visits revealed, interviewees might also be inclined to avoid possible moments of discomfort or embarrassment. For instance, in one of my visits to meet the family of origin of the lawyer to whom I have already referred, his mother revealed that his son decided to change his name after finishing his professional degree. This was something that the lawyer did not share with me in our interview. Her mother added that this was because her son considered his name to be '*flaite*'. In a follow-up interview, the lawyer told me, in a calm but still somewhat embarrassed voice, that he had change his name to improve his chances of employment.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have addressed the methodological decisions and the issues of positionality underpinning this research. Recognising that situated experience and standpoints matter for the practice of research, I have offered both an account and reflections on the methodological choices involved in my study of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile. In so doing, I tackled the whole research process, including considerations about family history and positionality, the definition of the sample, establishing trust and negotiating access, the analytical and interpretative process of my empirical material, the risks and ethical dilemmas involved, and the main limitations of this study.

With the above in mind, I conclude Part One of this thesis to move onto my empirical chapters. In what follows, then, I look closely at the strong belief in and value of education, as well as its intergenerational making, among my interviewees (Chapter 5), how they navigate a highly privatised, segregated, and low-quality school system (Chapter 6), their encounters with the world of elites at top universities (Chapter 7), the barriers and dilemmas they faced in the exercise of high-status occupations (Chapter 8), and their family relations, both with their families of origin and their own (Chapter 9).

Part Two:

The experience of long-range upward mobility in contemporary Chile

Chapter 5.

‘Studying was a duty to my family’: The place and value of education among the Chilean *clases populares*

Introduction

Carmen, a doctor from UCH in her mid-thirties, comes back almost every weekend to visit her ageing parents in the impoverished neighbourhood in which she grew up during the 1980s and 1990s. Although Carmen is in many respects a different person nowadays from the girl raised in a precarious neighbourhood located in the southern area of Santiago, she feels nonetheless deeply ‘rooted’ in, and ‘proud’ of, her class origins. At the heart of this sense of rootedness and pride is a particular understanding of education in her family. Far from an individualised process of self-advancement and ambition (Landerretche and Lillo, 2011), Carmen underlines the ‘collective effort’ made by both her parents and grandparents to ensure that she valued education and succeeded at school. ‘For me’, Carmen emphasises, ‘studying was a duty to my family and to my [social] class’.

Against the backdrop marked by the sharp decline of the traditional Chilean working-class, spurred by neoliberal restructuring in recent decades, Carmen’s experience is distinctive. An important part of this distinctiveness is tied to Carmen’s paternal grandfather. Embedded in the working-class movement of the early 20th century, her grandfather instilled in Carmen the concept of education as both a duty towards her class background and a form of emancipatory self-cultivation. Born in the early 1930s, Carmen’s grandfather had no formal

schooling, but as a self-taught man he became a trade union leader and an active member of the Communist Party—working for more than two decades in the coal mines in the south of Chile. He was key in transmitting to Carmen a wider cultural repertoire and a sense of belonging to a politically conscious and organised tradition of the Chilean working-class movement that had developed from the late nineteenth century. The main features of this cultural heritage tied to the working-class—pride, self-respect, and the value of education—became the hallmarks of Carmen’s upbringing as well as her drive to succeed at school.

Carmen’s deep commitment to education was also shaped by an intergenerational family project to become ‘somebody in life’. For Carmen’s parents, insufficient formal schooling defined much of their living conditions as well as their frustrations for a better life. Her father, a crusty hardworking man, had to abandon his secondary studies to work as an independent shoemaker and later on in a factory. Her mother completed her secondary studies in a polytechnic school; she initially worked in a children’s nursery but, after the birth of Carmen and her siblings, left her job and became a housewife. Carmen, growing up in a household whose finances were often strained to the breaking point, learnt from a very early age that education was the key to overcome not just her own deprivations but her family’s, too. ‘My mum would tell me: “If you do not want to live our penuries, educate yourself”’. And my dad would add: “Get an education, so that no man can overstep you!”’, emphasising the compounded disadvantages of class and gender she would otherwise face.

This central value of education was put into practice by the sturdy discipline of Carmen’s family aimed at making sure that succeeding at school was an ‘absolute priority’. Carmen’s daily life was organised by a set of strict rules that both her parents and grandparents had set up for her education. Carmen recalls a ‘daily supervision’, particularly by her mother, of her homework and other academic duties. This was reinforced by her father’s regular inquiries

about her performance at school, and her grandfather's early encouragement to read and develop her own opinions. Carmen's upbringing was thus moulded by the 'fundamental' place education had in her family and their set of dispositions and resources aimed at encouraging her success at school.

The main elements shaping Carmen's value of education—the existence of a cultural repertoire for vaunting education, an intergenerational family project of mobility, and a family organisation and parenting style seeking to ensure school success—largely echo the experience of the vast majority of my interviewees. Like Carmen, most of them see their investments in education as part of a larger family project encouraging upward mobility via the rewards that only education can provide. Yet, unlike Carmen, as a result of the weakening of working-class identities prompted by neoliberalism in recent decades, most interviewees conceive this as being primary the result of their families' efforts rather than tied to a wider working-class drive or belonging.

In this chapter, I examine the central place and value of education among the families of interviewees. By understanding social mobility as a cumulative, multigenerational process (Bertaux and Thompson, 1997; Mare 2011), my approach goes beyond conventional analysis of education and mobility in two ways. Contrary to the traditional two-generation focus on the relationship between origins and destinations (Hout and DiPrete, 2004), I assess the role both of parents and grandparents and other extend kin in this process. Rather than conceiving education as a matter of occupational entry (e.g., Goldthorpe, 1980) by qualification or a process of accumulation strategies (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984[1979]), I explore the meaning-making process tied to its value among families embodying different ways of embodying working-classness in contemporary Chile. Including the role of gender and wider family relations, I draw attention both to the content of cultural heritage framing the place

and value of education, and its modes of transmission. Placing their mobility narratives into this broader web of inter-dependence and meaning, I argue, is crucial to understand an orientation towards mobility as a collective rather than an individual undertaking.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I provide a broad depiction of the intersections of the family stories of interviewees and the wider transformation of the Chilean working-class. In particular, I focus on the different ways of embodying working-classness and how the advent of neoliberalism altered the way they conceive their social background and how they relate this to education. Secondly, building on the above, I identify the main cultural repertoires (Naudet, 2018[2012]) for valuing education among interviewees. Thirdly, I address the need to revert the frustrated or half-realised educational aspirations of their parents or grandparents as another relevant factor shaping the orientation to education. Fourthly, I examine the concrete ways families organised themselves to support and guide the education of interviewees. Lastly, I offer some concluding remarks and place my findings in dialogue with the existing literature.

From *Clases Populares* to the Family: Educational Expansion and Neoliberal Restructuring

Juan, a lawyer trained at PUC, comes from a family background whose roots are in the *haciendas*—the basis of Chilean society from Colonial times in the 17th century until the mid-20th century (Bengoa, 1988, 1990; Jocelyn-Holt, 2005[1992]; Morandé, 2017[1984]; see Chapter 3). Led by *patrones* (landowners; most of them belonging to Chile's landed aristocracy), at the core of the relations of the hacienda was an informal system of paternalism and deference, making *patrones* responsible for the wellbeing of their *inquilinos*' (service tenants) and *peones*' (small wage labourers). In the almost entirely self-contained micro-society

that defined much of the economic and social life of the hacienda, Juan's paternal grandfather worked all his life as an *inquilino* in charge of the estate's dairy. With just a few years of schooling, he married a housewife, with whom he had 6 children. As the living conditions in the haciendas varied significantly, they were lucky, especially compared to Juan's maternal side of the family. Juan's maternal grandfather worked as a *peón* in the same area but under much harsher working conditions. With no formal schooling, he married an equally uneducated peasant and had thirteen children. He was an alcoholic and unstably supported two families living in small shacks. 'They had a tough life, really difficult', Juan recalls. 'The hacienda and a life of work there were the only things they knew', he further points out.

Unlike Carmen's paternal grandfather, with an oppositional working-class value system and political consciousness defined both by his work as coal miner and by his membership to the Communist Party, the worldview of Juan's grandparents was fashioned by the hierarchical and conservative world of the hacienda. This contrast serves to illustrate how the identity of the Chilean *clases populares* were highly heterogeneous as they were linked to the 'structural dualism' (Medina Echavarría, 1998 [1963]) of its economy: the co-existence of urban sections largely composed by manufacture workers and tertiary employees, and a rural society organised around haciendas. In mid-20th century Chile, a working-class identity was prevalent and solid in the industrial districts, where trade unions or Communist or Socialist parties had a robust presence; but weaker for the poor peasants confined to Central Valley's haciendas or those increasingly moving into the more dynamic urban centres and subsisting under informal employment (Angell, 1972).¹⁰⁰ Chile's *ancien regime*, as I noted in Chapter 3,

¹⁰⁰ Throughout this research, I refer to the Chilean *clases populares* both to highlight their historical specificity and characterise the class of origin of the families of interviewees. Compared to the English working-classes, the first of its kind, their Chilean counterparts emerging in the late nineteenth century never developed the same cultural density, as of a world almost entirely self-absorbed and separated from the rest of society (e.g., Thompson, 2013[1963]; Hoggart, 2009[1957]). The sense of identity and consciousness of the Chilean *clases populares* was weaker due to the late and uneven industrialisation across the nation since the late nineteenth century until the 1970s. As a result, the living conditions and lifestyles of an industrial working-class never fully

only waned in the late 1960s and 1970s under Frei's and Allende's governments, who launched strong redistributive policies—including an agrarian and an educational reform.

Despite these differences of political outlook, what united Carmen's and Juan's grandparents was a common early abandonment of school. Their stories of inexistent or unfinished primary schooling largely echo the experience of the Chilean *clases populares* for much of the twentieth century. In 1930 secondary state schools educated 14 percent of the age cohort, which only increased to 36 percent in 1960 (Ponce de León, 2018; see also Rengifo, 2012). Both Carmen and Juan were well aware of the difficult relationship between their forbears and schooling. Alluding to the common view of education in the rural world in which his grandparents lived, Juan tellingly recalls:

'You went to school to learn to read a bit but, most important of all, to get a meal, breakfast and lunch. That was important because it meant you had a mouth less to feed in the family. [...] But as soon as the children reached the age to work, they were out of school, because they could support the family's economy, however small their contribution was'.

Only in the early 1970s universal coverage of primary education was completed and the access to mass secondary education began. Henceforward, the youth from disadvantaged origins pursued secondary studies in the search of greater occupational opportunities for the future (e.g., Gurrieri, 1971). Like Carmen's parents, Juan's were part of this new generation. From an early age, Juan's father, the eldest son, combined work in the estate and schooling in the nearby primary school and later in state secondary school of the closest town. Coming from an even more destitute background, Juan's mother was only able to study a few years; she felt the family pressure to support her younger siblings from a fairly young age, pushing her to leave primary school unfinished. As Juan recounts, both his father and mother saw

prevailed over the lower classes as a whole. I urge readers to bear in mind this clarification throughout this thesis.

their prospects in the rural areas of their childhood as ‘too precarious’ to guarantee them the adequate satisfaction of aspirations that greater schooling had opened up for them. After graduation, his father worked for a while as a car mechanic and later became a *carabinero* (policeman)—one of the few respected and stable occupational pathways available for lower class youth in the aftermath of Allende’s socialist government. His mother managed to escape the restrictive confinement of the hacienda only to find a job as a *nana* (domestic servant) and later on, after marriage, as a full-time housewife.

Due to his father’s occupational duties as a law-enforcement officer, Juan’s childhood in the 1980s was mostly spent in provincial towns in southern and central Chile. Though his father had a stable job, the family income was very low: ‘we lived under a planned austerity’, Juan notes. ‘No holidays of any kind, except to see relatives occasionally; no extra-expenses beyond what was strictly necessary; no books, except for those brought up by evangelical supporters from time to time’. Significantly, unlike Carmen’s family’s *loyalist* stance—rooted in a class-conscious sense of belonging to the working-class movement—, Juan grew up in a family holding a *legitimist* stance—one that acknowledged the legitimacy of existing social hierarchies (see Chapter 2). Indeed, his parents had a robust identification with the police force institution—which provided them with their livelihood and some institutional safety nets—and, by extension, with Pinochet’s authoritarian regime, restoring order after the political and economic instability of Allende’s government (e.g., Valenzuela, 1991). ‘Order, hard-work, and discipline’ were Juan’s parents’ main values as well as their source for self-respect.

If Carmen and Juan represent two distinct forms of working-classness, Loreto, a middle-aged engineer trained at UCH, embodies a third one. Loreto’s family past is embedded in the poor city-dwellers who were also a significant part of Chile’s *clases populares* throughout the

20th century. Loreto's grandparents, on both sides, as she feebly remembers, received the few years of primary schooling which were the norm in their natal towns in southern Chile, raised numerous children and, in due course, emigrated to Santiago in search of better occupational fortunes. In the 1950s and 1960s, as the urban expansion gathered force, Loreto's family was part of the mass of poor people, known as *pobladores* (Espinoza, 1988), streaming into cities to inhabit empty land to which they had no legal right. Lacking the stronger collective references with which Carmen and Juan accounted for their class backgrounds, Loreto portrays her own simply as '*gente que viene de abajo*' ('people coming from the bottom').

Loreto's parents were raised in very deprived households mostly subsisting on informal employment. Her father did some years of primary school and worked doing a series of casual jobs without a fixed position—first as a street cleaner, later as a welder's apprentice, and finally as a welder in his own right. Her mother only got a few years of schooling before her family decided to settle down in Santiago, where she worked in a textile factory as a cleaner, and then as a day-care assistant in the factory's nursery. Unlike Carmen's or Juan's families, poor city-dwellers like Loreto's parents, with no clearly defined political affiliations, could only rely on their own family networks or the support of the Catholic Church. After Loreto's father left the home—a fairly common occurrence of paternal absenteeism among *clases populares* (e.g., Salazar, 2006)—, her mother sought refuge with the maternal grandmother and in a parish community located in one of the informal land seizures in Santiago's periphery.

By the early 1980s, Loreto's mother, after some years without a stable employment, found a job in the local street markets known as *ferias*.¹⁰¹ At the time, she was a good example of the self-employed workers mostly engaged in 'survival activities' under 'forced entrepreneurialism' (Portes *et al.*, 1989) during the hard years of the economic recession of 1982-1983—a period in which a third of the labour force was unemployed, and poverty reached nearly half of the Chilean households (Ffrench-Davis, 2017). Evoking this period of her childhood, Loreto depicts her mother as belonging to '*gente de esfuerzo, de mucho sacrificio*' (hard-working, very sacrificed people): people that, although coming from extremely poor backgrounds blocking them the freedom to choose the life they wanted to live, worked hard 'in whatever job they could' to make a living for their families. Loreto also acknowledges the values of 'decency', 'honesty', and 'work well done' imparted by her grandmother and a 'sense of solidarity' that was part of the role of the Catholic Church of those years. Significantly, Loreto still identifies with these values.

Anchored in a disrupting and often traumatic modernisation process transforming Chilean society over the 20th century, Carmen's, Juan's and Loreto's multigenerational family stories offer three different ways in which interviewees describe both the difficulties of their forebears to incorporate themselves into the educational system and the changing nature of their backgrounds. Educationally, their narratives testify to a slow and uneven access to schooling, especially for the poor. The experiences of their grandparents in the 1940s and 1950s, and their parents in the 1960s and 1970s, show how their chances of entering or finishing secondary school remained marginal (Serrano *et al.*, 2018). It was only in the 1980s and early 1990s, the period in which Carmen, Juan or Loreto themselves started their own schooling, that the educational system at the secondary level achieved full coverage. Since

¹⁰¹ Originating from colonial times, *ferias* are markets that operate on the streets of Chilean cities, mainly selling agricultural products at a low price. *Ferias* usually combine both formal and informal work conditions. For a broader historical account on this topic, see Salazar (2003).

the 1990s, this continual expansion opened access to tertiary education for the most disadvantaged socioeconomic groups, reducing educational gaps but also creating a highly stratified higher educational system (Brunner, 2015; see Chapter 6 and 7).

Economically, Carmen's, Juan, and Loreto's stories attest to the declining role of the haciendas, the expansion of urbanisation and, more recently, the advent and consolidation of neoliberal policies. Turning Chile's economy into one of the most open, market-based economies in the world, Pinochet's neoliberal reforms shattered the traditional *clases populares* through the combined impact of the loss of labour protections, deindustrialisation, and political repression (Drake, 1996; Winn, 2004). As the narratives of Carmen and Loreto suggest, the decline of the industrial-manufacturing sector was reversed by the growth of the labour force engaged in the private sectors and in the informal economy (Wormald and Torche, 2004). In subsequent years, the rise of the service economy, a high precariousness in the labour market, and a diminished influence of work organisations in the political system, have become the salient features shaping the identities of the new *clases populares* (Ruiz and Boccardo, 2015).

Both the neoliberal restructuring and the educational expansion of recent decades have made the old *clases populares* almost disappear. As the three narratives move forward, their family descriptions gradually tighten from wider definitions of their social backgrounds (e.g., the working-class in the industrial districts, the peasants of the haciendas, the *pobladores* of the cities subsisting under informal employment) to its narrowest dimensions (family, both nuclear and extended). Thus, Carmen's notable exception notwithstanding, the wider cultural aspects that defined much of their backgrounds in the past tend to lose their force and are increasingly circumscribed to family values. This process largely reflects what Mike Savage (2000) calls the 'individualisation of class': people seeing their identities or life-chances less

in collective class-conscious terms and more as reflecting their own endeavours or failings (see also Sennett and Cobb, 1972). The new Chilean *clases populares*, bereft of the collective frameworks that once gave meaning to their lives but finding no solid alternative identity in the precarious employment of the service economy, have been ‘forced’ to place their expectations for a better future in their children’s education (Araujo and Martucelli, 2012b, p. 91). This constitutes the basis of the ensuing analysis around strategies of upward mobility in this and subsequent chapters of this research.

Studying to ‘Be Somebody in Life’: Three Cultural Repertoires for Valuing Education

Tracing the ‘different constituencies’ (Reay, 1997) of the Chilean *clases populares* is not only important to better understand the class of origin of interviewees. It is also significant to comprehend the orientation that their families adopt towards education and upward mobility. Indeed, when Carmen said that ‘studying was a duty to my family and to my class’, she was placing her understanding of education as part of the vision and value of education transmitted by her paternal grandfather. In the early decades of the 20th century, the coal mines located in and around the southern cities of Lota and Coronel generated a considerable pole of industrial development. But the precarious working conditions, the lack of adequate housing, the proliferation of occupational diseases, and the shortage of educational establishments created a strong oppositional identity among the coal workers, leading to numerous strikes and the development of a labour unionism at the national scale (Angell 1972; Touraine *et al.*, 1966). As both a union leader and member of the Communist Party in this industrial district, Carmen’s grandfather was steeped in a strongly class-conscious tradition of the Chilean working-class movement.

Against this backdrop, Carmen recalls growing up with stories about his grandfather, covering his work in the coal mines, activities to expand literate culture among workers, and involvement in organising the working-class movement. Bearing the imprint of what the historian Eduardo Devés (1991) has called ‘la cultura obrera ilustrada’ (the enlightened working-class culture), a proud working-class identity was the stamp of those stories. Arising from the politicised fringes of the Chilean working-class movement in the early 20th century, the enlightened working-class culture was characterised by a high valuation of culture and education as a form of emancipatory self-cultivation.¹⁰² The stories about Carmen’s grandfather thus constituted not just a set of tools to face and make sense of Pinochet’s brutal repression of the working-class movement. Significantly, they also provided a still strong cultural repertoire to value education. If by the late 1980s and early 1990s, education became the safest route to become ‘somebody in life’ for those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds, for Carmen’s family that idea was modulated by that broader and deeper class heritage. For Carmen, studying was both a ‘duty to my family and to my class’. ‘That is what our grandfather taught us’, Carmen further says. In this view, studying to ‘become somebody in life’ is inextricably linked to a wider form of class self-empowerment.

To a greater or lesser extent, the traces of the ‘enlightened working-class culture’ were present among 9 other interviewees. Carlos, a middle-aged doctor trained at UCH, grew up in a family in the late 1960s and early 1970s, closely linked to the left-wing ‘Movimiento de

¹⁰² The enlightened working-class culture, first articulated by the founder of the Communist Party Luis Emilio Recabarren, explicitly aimed at the ‘regeneration of the popular subject’ as a condition of possibility for a revolutionary leap towards higher social forms among Chilean socialists. Faced with the degradation with which capital subjected workers, socialists like Recabarren thought, the proletarian mass was far from being prepared to assume the leading role in shaping the course of history in a socialist direction. This vision was embedded in the positivist ideas of material and cultural progress of humanity through the cultivation of cultural and artistic practices that included philharmonics, reading clubs, and the observance of a strict code of moral behaviour (Devés, 1991; see also Pinto, 1999 and Serrano *et al.*, 2012b: Ch. 9). Notwithstanding its many idiosyncratic peculiarities, the enlightened working-class culture finds some important parallels in a large body of English scholarship insisting on the positive values and virtues of working-class life (e.g., Hoggart, 2009 [1957]; Marshall, 1950; Thompson, 2013 [1963]; Young and Willmott, 2011[1957] ; Williams, 1961). I express my thanks to Marcelo Casals for drawing my attention to this concept as well as this line of interpreting my findings.

Acción Popular Unitaria' (Unitary Popular Action Movement), also known by its acronym MAPU.¹⁰³ Carlos remembers a childhood in which his parents actively participated in '*jornadas de educación popular*' (working-class education days) organised by themselves and other 'militants'. In those activities, in addition to discuss the political topics shaping Allende's government, there was a 'strong emphasis on the education of the *clase popular* (working-class)', Carlos recollects. Mirroring Carmen's experience, for Carlos, too, the strong value of working-class education 'deeply' affected the 'environment' and 'values' in which he was raised—putting them on an early course of valuing education. 'Education was key for the progress of the people', Carlos underlines. 'And my family felt part of that process very much', he further points out.

Like the enlightened working-class culture, the once broad public tradition in education built around the state secondary schools known as *liceos* was another powerful cultural repertoire for valuing education. If the former was closely tied to a distinct and specific sub-culture within the Chilean working-class movement, the latter—initially created by and for the elites but later on embraced by the middle-classes—became a national framework for public education (González Le Saux, 2011). Even if attended by a minority from the early 1930s to the 1960s, the 'civic community' and 'historical conscience' channelled through *liceos* contributed to creating a broader and more diverse elite, whose 'republican and meritocratic ethos' challenged the past structured around haciendas and pushed Chile towards modernity (Serrano, 2018).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ MAPU was first formed as a splinter group of the Christian Democrat Party in 1969. Inspired by the Theology of Liberation, this small but influential left-wing party became part of the Unidad Popular coalition during Allende's administration, was subsequently repressed by Pinochet's dictatorship, and some of its leading figures played an important role in the transition to democracy and Chile's public affairs (Valenzuela, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Throughout this research, when I refer to the 'broad public tradition tied to *liceos*' readers should bear in mind this rich and idiosyncratic tradition in public education in Chile. As I noted already, secondary education coverage through *liceos* only increased from 14 percent in 1932 to 36 percent in 1960. Still, *liceos* consolidated an 'imaginary' of the nation built through the prism of a liberal and social democratic historiography projecting Chile into the future (Serrano, 2018). If that vision of community was primarily built by the middle-classes, it

A positive recognition of *liceos* was significant across many interviewees, especially older ones. Carlos, and his family, was one of them. Although his parents were part of the conscious working-class movement, they also transmitted a lasting sense of pride for being educated at *liceos* to Carlos and his siblings. Indeed, for Carlos's parents and himself, *liceo* certainly meant 'better occupational opportunities' for themselves and their offspring. But at least equally important, as Carlos remarks, attending *liceos* also involved acquiring wider 'values,' such as the 'importance of literacy', 'opening up culture for the people', and the 'expansion of democracy'. Significantly, it is to this broad public tradition tied to *liceos* to which interviewees like Carlos and their families cherished and felt attached—a trait shared especially by those who were educated at these educational institutions before the reforms of the early 1980s (see Chapter 6).

Yet, however relevant the enlightened working-class culture or the broad public tradition tied to *liceos* were for some of my interviewees, the strength of both these cultural repertoires has lost much of its former traction among the younger generations. This trend has been associated with the neoliberal restructuring of recent decades, the rapid privatisation of schooling, and the central place that education has acquired as the most determinant mechanism structuring Chilean society (Wormald and Torche 2004; see Chapter 6). Since the 1990s onwards, as the opportunities to access higher education increased, the pressures to obtain academic credentials swiftly intensified—a process crystallising in the common belief that a person 'without a degree is worth nothing in Chile' (MacClure and Barozet, 2016,

was one also attempting to include *clases populares* via an active concern for local and popular culture, influenced by naturalism in literature or by the romantic school in folklore studies (Barr-Melej, 2001). Last, but certainly not least, *liceos* were key in promoting the incorporation of women into the public space. By the 1950s, female enrolment exceeded that of men (Serrano, 2018). It is *not* by chance, then, that the wider public tradition underpinning *liceos* is considered one of the most consistent integration projects the nation has ever had (Barr-Melej, 2001; Bellei and Pérez, 2015; Ruiz Schneider, 2010; Serrano, 2018).

p. 345). Under these new conditions, schooling is seen chiefly as providing the foundations for individual-based self-reliance and socioeconomic success (Ruiz Schneider, 2010, Ch. 5 and 6; see also Ruiz Schneider, 2018). These are the defining traits of what I call the neoliberal cultural repertoire for valuing education.

Table II: Three cultural repertoires for valuing education

Type of cultural repertoire	Salient values
Enlightened working-class culture (N=9)	Emancipatory self-cultivation as part of broader class empowerment and socialist politics
Broad public tradition tied to <i>liceos</i> (N=18)	Expansion of literacy, democracy, and citizenship
Neoliberal framework (N=42)	Individual-based self-reliance and search of socio-economic success

Note: As cultural repertoires can superimpose onto one another, particularly the enlightened working-class culture and the broad public tradition tied to *liceos*, interviewees can be inscribed to one or more of these cultural frameworks.

Jorge, a lawyer trained at PUC, personifies well this shift towards education. Brought up by a single-mother with primary studies, Jorge learnt to be self-reliant from an early age and make the most of his ‘slim chances’ to successfully navigate the educational system. Like the vast majority of interviewees, Jorge identifies himself as part of those ‘people of effort’ who see education as the best route to ‘become somebody in life’. Yet, unlike Carmen or Carlos, Jorge clearly sees education from a more individualistic prism, emphasising its value for gaining individual mobility and economic rewards. For him, success in life and in education

requires, above all, ‘personal motivation’, ‘seeking opportunities’ and ‘seizing them’. This attitude ennobles the ability that some individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds possess to work hard to reach their socioeconomic aims, while critiquing those ‘who prefer to complain about the lack of opportunities’—an approach largely reflecting what Arteaga and Pérez (2011: 78) call ‘*el orgullo de arreglárselas solo*’ (the pride of self-sufficiency), a feature characteristic of *clases populares* under neoliberalism.

Importantly, Jorge’s vision signals a broader shift from *collective demands* around the state, which characterised the period prior to Pinochet’s dictatorship, towards a quest for *intersubjective recognition* via individual achievements channel through the educational system. Still, however strong is this attitude among younger interviewees and their families, the ‘neoliberalisation’ of Chilean culture has not been fully pervasive (see Chapter 8 and 9). If the values embraced by Jorge have indeed become prominent, they do not always translate into the full espousal of an ‘individualistic meritocracy’ (UNDP 2017: 247). Even among those embracing a more individualistic framework, like Jorge himself, their success via education is inextricably linked to a larger family project (see section below). Nor does the rise of a neoliberal cultural repertoire entail a loss of influence of previous cultural forms for valuing education. As the cases of Carmen or Carlos suggest, the cultural repertoires that the families of interviewees mobilise to value education are both variegated and long-lasting. Once again, families, both nuclear and extended, play a key role in the promotion of education rooted over the ‘long-durée’ (Bertaux 1995: 73), but also co-existing, overlapping, or adjusting to new circumstances (Swidler 1986; more on this in Chapter 10).

‘My Mum Lived her Dreams through Me’: Frustrations, Expectations, and Commitments across Generations

The three cultural repertoires identified above did not function at an abstract level. On the contrary, they were enmeshed in concrete family configurations and dynamics. The case of Catalina, an engineer in her mid-thirties from PUC, gives voice to common motives amply resonating with families of interviewees. Unlike Carmen, Catalina was raised in a conservative, Catholic family, putting a strong emphasis on education and individual effort—the marks of a legitimist stance towards upward mobility. But much like Carmen, Catalina places the value of education and drive towards upward mobility as part of a broader multigenerational family project and not just something of her own making. Recalling her childhood, Catalina says:

‘My mom lived her dreams through me [*emphasis in her voice*]. She tried to guide me so that I would not make the same mistakes she made [...] She could not finish her [secondary] studies [because of an unexpected pregnancy], and that haunted her and my grandfather all their lives.

A central element in the value of education in Catalina’s family was the disappointed aspirations her mother had with her own education. As Catalina acknowledges, her mother’s ‘mistakes’ ‘haunted’ her family, especially the maternal grandfather, who held a few years of higher education in engineering at UCH and had big hopes for his offspring—which Catalina’s mother could not fulfil. Significantly, her mother made sure I did not make the same ‘mistakes’ that she had incurred, Catalina remembers.

Like Catalina, Carmen, too, underlines the ‘big frustration’ her grandfather had about the truncated education of her father.

‘For my grandfather it was a big frustration [*emphasis in her voice*] that my dad, who was one of the best students of his children at school [*emphasis in her voice*] ... for him it was a frustration that he had not finished secondary school. But the social reality of the time [*Carmen is referring to the late 1970s and early 1980s*] limited him and forced him to abandon school and find a job. But my grandfather always felt bad because my dad could not study. That was always there in my family’.

For Carmen and Catalina, the disappointed or half-fulfilled aspirations of their parent’s education were important in shaping the ambitions that their parents and grandfathers later on instilled in them (c.f., Mauger, 1989; Beaud, 2010; Pasquali, 2014). In both cases, their relatives transferred the frustration that resulted from their inability to better their social status to a project of social mobility for their offspring. They, in turn, assumed a positive attitude to school success underpinned by powerful sense of responsibility—‘a duty’, to recall Carmen’s words—to their families. For both Carmen and Catalina, their family-based investment in education can be seen as a ‘family project of restoration’ (Reay 2017, p. 115)—a way of reinstating the family to what was seen for them to be their rightful social position.

Yet Catalina’s experience is also relevant for the way she underscores the role of education in reverting the precarious living conditions of her family. In her own words:

‘The expectations for a better life, to avoid the precariousness, the instability that comes in life for not having a [professional] degree... Those things were very present in my home.’

For Catalina, the possession of a professional ‘degree’ is the best guarantee to ‘avoid’ the ‘precariousness’ and ‘instability’ her mother experienced throughout most of her life. That awareness was very potent in Catalina’s family, and put her on the path to reach university from a very early age: ‘I knew I had to go to university, not just do well at school, since I was very little’, she points out.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ In Catalina’s case, it was also significant the fact that her grandfather and uncles had attended university. Their aspirations and know-how certainly shaped Catalina’s perception of what was possible and desirable from an early age regarding her own education within her family (see more broadly on this Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, 1970 and Lahire, 2010, 2012[1995]). Although her case represents a minority among interviewees (only 6

This was a common attitude across interviewees. Diego, another engineer from PUC, confirms it. Raised in a small provincial village with an absent father and a mother with incomplete secondary studies, Diego tells me how, as a small boy, he became aware of the pressing need to study. Evoking his childhood, he says: ‘When we happened to see my father, he always told us to study.... Because he was not a professional, he had to endure all sorts of discriminations in his work, in his salary, and bear bad or contemptuous treatment’. And Diego’s mother would repeatedly add: ‘If you do not want to live my life, then study [*strong emphasis in his voice*]. That is the only way you and your brother can have a different future.’ Thus, Diego was well aware, from an early age, that the place education had in his family was part of a collective undertaking rooted in a family past of struggling against adversity. In his own words:

‘I just think my mom had a lot of sadness and a lot of rejection to the difficult life she lived [...] She always told me that education makes you a different person and gives you different possibilities. Education was more important than money, than anything. Education as a way of being somebody in life, to count for others, becoming a better person [*his voice breaks with emotion*].’

Diego’s reverberating account is significant because of the way he brings education and the idea of becoming ‘somebody in life’ together. If this echoes common motives among students from disadvantaged origins (Dávila *et al.*, 2005; Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012b), the emotional force with which Diego conveys a strong sense in which the priority given to education was imbedded in his parents’ concrete experiences of class mistreatment. Diego expresses a deeper longing to redress the denied cultural membership and a devalued sense of self-worth transmitted by his parents: both to ‘count’ in the eyes of others as a legitimate being and to become a ‘better person’—endowing education with a potent moral character

out 60 had extended kin with some form of tertiary education), it nonetheless reinforces the need for a broad multigenerational approach to social mobility.

(Sayer, 2005). Significantly, Diego's parents thus provided a form of 'transmutation' as a possible strategy of transmission and not just repetition across generations (Thompson 1997, p. 46). It is these forms of intergenerational transmission, structured both around the search of respect *and* the moral enhancement associated with education, which are prevalent across interviewees and their families.

However, this process was compounded differently by the *gender* of interviewees. The contrast between Catalina and Carmen, on the one hand, and Diego, on the other, is telling in this regard. For Catalina, the pressures to succeed at school were closely tied to gendered expectations: 'You do not have to let a man maintain you, you have to be independent, you have to be able to take care of yourself', Catalina's mother would constantly emphasise during her childhood. As noted above, Carmen's upbringing was very much shaped by her father's awareness of the combined disadvantages of her class and gender background: "Get an education, so that no man can overstep you!", he would insistently highlight. None of these joint handicaps were present for Diego, or indeed for any other male interviewee. For female interviewees, education was thus not only the path to ensure a better occupational future; but, more broadly and most significantly, the safest route to gain autonomy and independence which otherwise remains so elusive for women from disadvantaged origins (Shahrokni, 2018, pp. 1182-1183). That powerful gender awareness runs through the childhoods of virtually all female interviewees.

Yet, beyond these gender differences, what unites the experience of interviewees is how they perceive themselves as responsible for a project whose objectives were imposed on them a young age by an external other in their families—be it parents, uncles or grandparents. Their narratives tend to repeatedly fit an individual project of mobility into a larger, family-based one, in which the individual trajectory becomes part of a wider strategy aimed at both

generating better living conditions and wider recognition. Upward mobility via education is thus part of a long-term undertaking, very often transmitted over multiple generations, assumed at a very early age, and projected into the future for the family as a whole. This project is fused with strong moral dispositions (Sayer, 2005), which composed the very core of the ‘mandate’ (Castillo, 2016; see also Pasquali, 2014) structuring upward mobility.

‘Education was an Absolute Priority’: Organising and Monitoring

School Success

The high expectations in education that interviewees convey are translated into concrete practices and parenting strategies. For the vast majority of them, these practices and parenting strategies are deployed to make education—as Carmen put it—‘an absolute priority’. In the pursuit of this goal, their families mobilised all the resources at their disposal—sometimes very meagre, others less so—in order to regulate family activities, children’s habits and school duties, and reinforce the school success of their offspring.

Juan, the lawyer trained at PUC we met earlier in this chapter, provides a good illustration of how this operated in practice. In a household living under a ‘planned austerity’, where ‘everything was saved’, and with ‘almost no books’, Juan’s education had nonetheless a ‘complete priority’. ‘Even over ‘food’, he emphasises: ‘if we had homework to do and we required some material to do it, then for my parents that was the absolute priority, even if that meant less food for the week or reducing another expense’. Juan’s mother played an active role in planning and organising the family life so as to be as much conducive as possible towards the school success of their children. She consistently demanded high school performance of her offspring and supervised their progress accordingly.

This stern parenting strategy was highly prevalent across interviewees. Diego's mother, despite being scarcely familiarised with the educational system herself, rigorously supervised her son's school performance. In Diego's own words:

'I still remember how she was always waiting for me after school, every day. She would always ask me if I had any homework. If I forgot something, she would beat me. So I could not forget about it. [...] She encouraged me in a very perfectionist way. For example, if I was failing in math, if I came with a 6 [on a scale from 1 to 7, where 7 is the maximum possible score], she would not accept that and tell me: "why did you not get a 7!?" And the same thing with *mi caligrafía* (my writing). She could spend hours beside me, revising every detail of my writing.'

Carmen, too, recalls her mother being 'super strict with my marks'. 'If I misspelt word', she recounts, 'she made me write it a hundred times' [*strong emphasis in her voice*]. But Carmen emphasises how her mother exerted a wider regulation of her behaviour outside school as well: 'I could not swear. It was completely forbidden', Carmen remembers. 'It was so strong that even when I was playing with friends from the neighbourhood who were used to swearing, I did not do it. They could do it, but I did not. I never questioned my mother on this', she further points out.

What is striking in these parenting pedagogical practices—planning and organising family life, close monitoring of school duties, regulation of wider behaviour, and the use of language with peers—is that they are indicative of the existence of a parenting style in some respects closer to the 'concerted cultivation' practiced by upper-middle-class families, and not just the 'the accomplishment of natural growth' associated with working-class or poor families (Lareau 2011[2003]). If the former is characteristically tied to the organisation of time, following rules, and the use of 'proper' language, the latter is with the provision of clear directives and a marked respect for parental authority.¹⁰⁶ Although enacted against a family

¹⁰⁶ According to Lareau (2011[2003]), through 'concerted cultivation' middle-class parents offer extensive support with homework, carefully curating extra-curricular activities, and engaging their children consistently in conversation and reasoning. They thus tend to familiarise their children with dispositions that function as

backdrops marked by resource scarcity, the combination of these family practices testifies to the existence of specific forms of relating to the future, written culture, and moral order anchored in an unquestioned parental authority and stringent rules across the families of interviewees. Significantly, this set of family dispositions has been identified as conducive to educational achievement among those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lahire, 2012[1995]; see also Sharokni, 2018).

Table III: Type of family-based support meant to ensure school success

	Prevalence
Daily supervision of school duties*	93, 3 %
Wider regulation of behaviour outside school**	85 %
Support provided by extended kin***	56, 7 %

Note: Percentages calculated on the basis of the information reported by interviewees. *Daily supervision of school duties includes the regular observance of interviewees' school habits, duties and performance by an older member of the family. **Wider regulation of behaviour outside school includes the control of the use of language and recreational activities consistent with satisfactory school performance. ***Support provided by extended kin includes the assistance offered by members of the extended family (e.g., grandparents, uncles, aunts), co-resident or not, in school supervision and childrearing activities.

Yet in this concerted family effort it was not only the mothers that were involved, though they clearly played a prominent role (e.g., Reay, 1998). The role of grandparents and other extended kin was highly significant as well. Carmen's grandfather not only transmitted a specific understanding and value of education to her granddaughter. He also lent his books

cultural capital, cultivating their capacity for 'symbolic mastery' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970), which is rewarded at school. By contrast, parents from working-class or poor families engage in the 'accomplishment of natural growth'—allowing their children more time to watch television, entertain themselves, invent games—which tends to be penalised at school.

to his granddaughter and encouraged her to read widely and from an early age, as well as helping to monitor her school progress regularly. As such, he was a strong complement to the discipline and structure provided by her parents. More generally, families often pooled resources together for the success of every single member at school. Catalina's case here is telling. She underlines that resources were mobilised by 'the whole family': her uncle gave Catalina every year 'a notebook and a rucksack', her grandparents provided 'the school uniform', and 'my mum got the rest'.

In the absence of direct parental regulation, grandparents were also crucial both as caregivers and supervising figures. Like Carmen and Catalina, Carlos—the doctor from UCH we encountered earlier in this chapter—also benefitted from the 'fundamental support' received from his nuclear and extended kin. His grandmothers, in particular, who lived in the same home, played an especially significant role for him: 'While my parents were working all day, my grandmother, who lived with me and my siblings all our childhood, gave us a real niche of security, stability and love', Carlos recounts. 'And this also included checking with us every day, on behalf of our parents, if we have done our school duties', Carlos further points out. The type of support delivered by extended kin was highly prevalent across interviewees: more than half of them benefited from the resources or assistance provided by grandparents or other relatives, co-resident or not.

A sustained priority given to educational success, accompanied by strong discipline and close monitoring by their parents or extended kin, were widespread among interviewees (see Table III). However, there were a few cases in which school success was not a priority. Here is where Loreto's experience, the middle-aged engineer from UCH we met earlier in this chapter, enters the scene again. With barely literate parents having only a few years of formal schooling, Loreto grew up in a family with durable attitudes of 'mistrust' or even 'resistance'

towards the educational system and the opportunities it could open up for them. Mirroring the problematic school experience of a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Edwards *et al.*, 1995; Raczynski, 2001), Loreto's relatives had all experienced disappointment with the educational system, expressed either in early failure at school, teachers being far more hostile towards them, or the pressing need to work and abandon their studies. Unlike Carmen's, Juan's, or Catalina's, Loreto's family was overwhelmed by the 'urgencies to put food on the table', which left little time or energy to devote to the schooling of their children.¹⁰⁷

Although Loreto's case represents a minority—indeed a counter-example—among interviewees, it is significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is a noticeable reminder that not all people who experience upward mobility necessarily belong to families that actively encourage their children's educational success (Lahire, 2012[1995], pp.319-352). In cases like Loreto's, as I show in greater detail in Chapter 6, it is crucial the intervention of sponsors outside their family, providing an indispensable help to successfully navigate the educational system. Secondly, compared to Loreto's example, my data suggests that most interviewees were raised in families that had 'small' or 'hidden' capitals (Pasquali 2014, pp. 46-47, 87) relevant for upward mobility—either in the form of a distinctive cultural repertoire for vaunting education (Carmen), a more stable occupational life (Juan) or in the possession of a higher level of cultural capital (Catalina) or, more generally, in the combined resources they could pool together as families. In all these cases, their families, both nuclear and extended,

¹⁰⁷ Despite the substantial rise of educational opportunities in recent decades, most children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds still experience education under the constant threat of failure or disappointment (Canales *et al.*, 2016; see also Dávila *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, the experience of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is still shaped by difficult transitions to higher education or the labour market (Canales *et al.*, 2016a; Meneses *et al.*, 2010), high levels of indebtedness and very low economic prospects (Urzúa, 2012). Significantly, those who neither study nor work (also known as '*niní*') within the age group of 20 to 24 years represent 15 percent of young men and 27 percent of young women (OECD, 2016). In the 18-29 age cohort, 11 percent of these young people are under income poverty and 22.7 percent under multidimensional poverty (INJUV, 2015).

encouraged their children (the interviewees) to succeed educationally, raising the perceived range of possible futures (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970: 192, 201), and inducing a strong moral commitment to promote their ascension intergenerationally.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined the place and value that education has among the families of interviewees. I have placed my findings within the broader context redefining the background of the Chilean *clases populares* over the past decades, spurred by a rapid expansion of the educational system and the impact of neoliberal restructuring on their class identities. My findings reveal the presence of a plurality of ways of valuing education, organised around three cultural repertoires: the enlightened working-class culture, the broad public tradition tied to *liceos*, and a neoliberal framework—which has gained increasing traction among younger generations. These cultural repertoires, mediated by extended kin and a strong family organisation meant to ensure the school success, defined both the content of cultural heritage framing the value of education and its modes of transmission. Significantly, they are translated into practice as a potent *moral duty*, structuring an orientation towards education as family-based rather than just an individual undertaking.

These findings contribute to existing research in at least three directions. Firstly, given the plurality of ways of valuing education, they call for much greater analytical attention to intra-class variation and the ‘different constituencies’ (Reay, 1997) shaping the class of origin of the upwardly mobile. In so doing, it is key to look more closely at the relationship between cultural repertoires (Naudet, 2018[2012]), accumulation strategies (Bourdieu, 1984[1979]), and ‘the moral significance of class’ (Sayer, 2005). Secondly, these findings highlight a much greater recognition to the role of grandparents and other extended kin play in both cultural

transmission and childrearing activities. As such, they forcefully foreground the need to move beyond a two-generation association model in mobility studies and the adoption of a broad multigenerational approach to mobility analysis (e.g., Mare, 2011). Finally, these findings considerably qualify conventional depictions of social mobility as an individual achievement (Landerretche and Lillo, 2011) or the common view that individualisation is a dominant societal pattern in Chile (e.g., UNDP, 1998, 2002). They suggest, by contrast, how the long-range upwardly mobile often mobilise competing or even contradictory logics when making sense of their lives—including superimposing new cultural models onto older ones (cf. Swidler, 1986). All these analytical issues remain significant throughout this research.

Chapter 6.

Standing out, standing alone: Navigating a privatised and segregated educational system

Introduction

When I first met Ana, the engineer from UCH we encountered in Chapter 1 of this thesis, she struck me as a successful and self-confident young professional currently working in one of the most prominent banks in Santiago. However, as she told me about her precarious upbringing and schooling, Ana's initial poise rapidly turned into a mixture of pride, insecurity, and ambivalence. Ana was raised in a conservative family with right-wing political leanings, putting a strong emphasis on education and individual effort — the marks of a *legitimist* stance towards upward mobility. Her childhood was fashioned by high economic and emotional investments by her parents and herself as they devoted themselves to her education. While navigating a highly privatised and socially segregated educational system, Ana struggled to affirm her identity as an educational achiever against the prevailing peer-group culture which did not see education in the same way her parents and she did. Mirroring the experience of most interviewees, *standing out* and *standing alone* were the hallmarks of her schooling.

Ana's schooling experience was crucially shaped by the educational reforms implemented by Pinochet's dictatorship from the early 1980s. Inspired by the privatisation model championed the Chicago School, this momentous educational shift was organised around the introduction of a per-student voucher payment and the freedom of families to attend any

school. The enactment of the voucher scheme and later on, the introduction of the family ‘co-payment’, swiftly gave rise to a highly privatised and segregated educational system according to the income of each family: *state* schools, educating mostly disadvantaged students from poor families; *voucher* schools, attended by lower middle-class and middle-class students; and *private-paid* schools, training pupils from upper middle-class or upper class backgrounds.

In this new educational field, schooling crystallised for Ana the tensions that arise from being educationally successful *and* coming from a disadvantaged background. Avoiding the low-quality, under-funded, and stigmatised inner-city *state* schools, Ana’s parents enrolled her in *voucher* schools in the hope this path would make more likely the dreams of higher education for her daughter. Yet Ana’s parents were scarcely familiarised with the inner workings of the educational system, and could only provide limited assistance to effectively navigate her schooling. In the mostly underperforming voucher schools that Ana attended, she stood out as an excellent student at the top of her class. But she persistently wrestled with balancing the expectations of her parents and teachers to excel academically and pressure from her peers to not act like a ‘nerd’.

Significantly, Ana repeatedly underlines feeling ‘isolated’, ‘anxious’ and ‘lacking guidance’ at key moments of her schooling. Ana’s stubborn determination to succeed at school against the odds, even if consistently supported by her family, made her constantly feel alone and persistently put at risk her social integration with peers. In her uneasy narrative, Ana thus highlights not just the continuous struggling against the educational framework she found herself in. Her troublesome experience navigating the educational system also foregrounds the highly fragile and contingent nature of school success for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Chilean context.

Against this backdrop, Ana was kept on track by the crucial intervention and guidance offered by key figures (e.g., schoolteachers, schoolmasters, extended kin) outside her nuclear families. The support she received from these figures, or ‘cultural guides’ (Lareau, 2015), was vital to diminish both her family’s lack of know-how and the fragility of her school success. Other interviewees, like Carmen, the doctor from UCH we met in Chapter 5, amply benefitted from their attendance to *liceos emblemáticos*—the highly selective secondary state schools boosting the access to elite universities for students from underprivileged families. In contrast to voucher or ordinary state schools, *liceos emblemáticos*—the remaining strongholds of the once broad public tradition tied to *liceos*—offered Carmen a much stronger academic preparation, exposed her to greater social diversity, and familiarised her with cultural norms more closely related to school success and elite values.

In this chapter, I address the schooling experience of interviewees and their families. If in Chapter 5 I explored the relationship interviewees maintain with their class of origin and the chief cultural repertoires and family dynamics underpinning their orientation to school success, here I focus on how interviewees navigate an educational field characterised by the prominent role acquired by the private education and the sharp decline in status of state schooling. In dialogue with research underlining the significance of ‘cultural guides’ (Lareau, 2015) and school trajectories (Jack, 2014, 2019; Pasquali, 2014) for upward mobility, I explore the specific experiences and tensions shaping the school trajectories of interviewees. In particular, I argue that, by altering the tenuous link between the ‘objective chances’ and ‘subjective expectations’ (Bourdieu, 1962, pp. 36-8) behind the fragile and contingent educational prospects of interviewees, both cultural guides and *liceos emblemáticos* act in favour of their school success and upward trajectories.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I address the main transformations affecting the Chilean educational field in recent decades, and how this has shaped the schooling experience of my interviewees. Secondly, I examine the particular tensions and problems they face while traversing the privatised and segregated educational system. Thirdly, I show the role played by cultural guides in reducing the lack of know-how the interviewees and their families at pivotal moments in their schooling. Fourthly, I tackle the relative significance of *liceos emblemáticos* versus ordinary state and voucher schools in this process. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks by placing my findings in dialogue with the existing literature.

From State to Private Schooling: the New Route for Upward Mobility?

Resonant with Ana's experience, most interviewees, especially the younger ones, did their schooling at voucher schools that were created in the early 1980s. Inspired by the model of privatisation advanced by Milton Friedman and the promise of enhanced educational quality via competition, the creation of private schools of this kind was part of a larger series of pro-market reforms undertaken by Pinochet's dictatorship (Torche 2005b). In 1981, at both primary and secondary levels, the administration of the state schools was transferred to the local governments and a nationwide per-student subsidy was introduced, allowing low-income families to choose between the state schools and the new privately-run *voucher* schools.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Before the reforms of 1981, there were three types of schools in Chile: *state-schools*, centrally administered by the Ministry of Education; *subsidised private schools*, often run by religious institutions, who did not charge fees and received a government subsidy; and *unsubsidised private schools*, institutions receiving no public funding. After the reforms, *state-schools* were decentralised from the Ministry of Education to the local governments or municipalities; they continued to be funded centrally, but municipalities started to receive a *per-student* payment for every child attending their schools. Most significantly, the newly created *subsidised private schools* began to receive exactly the same per-student payment as the state schools and rapidly increased their student intake in subsequent years. Throughout this research, to distinguish them from the subsidised private schools existing before the reforms and following Hsieh and Urquiola (2006, p. 1480), I call the latter *voucher* schools.

Table IV: Choice of state and private primary schooling before and after the educational reforms of 1981

	Before 1981	After 1981
Public	100 %	6, 4 %
Private	0 %	93, 6 %

Note: Calculations based on information reported by interviewees

This landmark re-orientation rapidly gave rise to an educational system arranged according to the income of each household: *state* schools educating mainly disadvantaged students from poor families; *voucher* schools attended by lower-middle and middle-income students; and *private-paid* schools training students from privileged backgrounds (Elacqua, 2012; Mizala and Torche, 2012; Valenzuela *et al.*, 2014). In due course, too, this institutional shift galvanised the expansion of private over state schooling. In just three decades, this privatising trend reverted the historical predominance of state education since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century (Bellei, 2015; Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006): if in 1980 about 85 percent of students were educated in the public sector, by 2018 those trained in the private sector reached more than 60 percent of the overall student intake—an expansion largely concentrated on voucher schools (MINEDUC, 2018). This trend is well reflected across interviewees: while none was educated at a private institution before the educational reforms, more of 90 percent of them did so after the reform was implemented (see Table IV).

Yet accompanying this preference for private over state education, there were larger and deeper sociological reasons influencing the decisions of the families of interviewees. When I asked Ana about her primary school, the first thing she made clear to me was that ‘[the school

she attended] was not *una escuela municipal* (state school) [*strong emphasis in her voice*].

Revealingly, Ana refers to the contrast between state schools and the voucher school she was enrolled in by her parents in the following terms:

‘I did not see delinquent children or physically or psychologically abused children. I never saw anything like that...you know, the things you see at *escuelas municipales*. I saw my classmates and the rest of the students as very similar to me, most of them coming from similar families in the neighbourhood ... I think it was a good atmosphere, you know, orderly and well-structured’.

As Ana points out, voucher schools were associated with a ‘good atmosphere’. By a ‘good atmosphere’, she primarily means a school in which ‘order’, ‘control’ and ‘discipline’ prevail. ‘For my mum and myself, order, protection and discipline were very important’, she further explains. In contrast to the dangerous or conflictive environment associated with state schools, this orderly and protective atmosphere perceived to be linked to voucher schooling (e.g., Espínola, 1993; Canales *et al.*, 2016a) was similarly relevant for many interviewees whose parents opted for this type of schooling.

Like Ana, Héctor, another engineer from UCH who did his primary schooling at a voucher school in the early 1990s, readily admits that the primary school he joined ‘was not the worst in the neighbourhood [*emphasis in his voice*]’. He points out to two other adjoining state schools ‘that were attended by poorer people, by *flaites*’. Importantly, by using the term *flaite*—a derogatory term applied to people of inferior position in the class structure and who characteristically have a defiant attitude towards authority (Contreras *et al.*, 2016)—, Héctor draws a potent symbolic boundary between the students educated at his voucher school and those who attended the state education. Just like Ana’s parents, Héctor’s parents made substantial efforts to distance themselves from the stigmatised populations of *flaites* residing in the same or neighbouring urban areas but whose children were enrolled in state schools.

Both Ana and Héctor thus give voice to the degraded status of state schools—free and obliged by law to accept all students—and the practices of ‘socio-educational segregation’ among ‘poor’ and ‘lower-middle-class’ families since the reforms of the early 1980s (Canales *et al.*, 2016a). Although Ana’s family came from ‘lower middle-class’ but not a ‘poor’ background, for her parents it was ‘essential’ that ‘I attended the best school that they could afford’, even if that meant ‘squeezing the family budget’. For Ana’s and Héctor’s families and many other interviewees, voucher schools — selecting students and later on charging fees — became an attractive option for lower-middle-income families trying to avoid state schools, but who were unable to afford the expensive private-paid schools.

The expansion of these practices over the past decades are indicative that the neoliberal reforms initiated by Pinochet’s dictatorship were not just confined to its institutional arrangements, but have also impacted people’s culture and morality more broadly (MacClure and Barozet, 2016). In their avoidance of the stigma associated with state schooling (e.g., insecurity, crime, drug addiction), Ana’s and Héctor’s parents sought to distance themselves from the education freely distributed by the state. For them, the choice and payment of voucher schools for their children became an important part of the affirmation of their sense of ‘decency’ under neoliberalism (Martínez and Palacios, 1996). These developments have consolidated private strategies tied to voucher schooling—which are seen as morally virtuous or more conducive to school success—, while reinforcing prejudices against those who rely on state schooling (Canales *et al.*, 2016a). These practices not only testify to the rapidly declining status of state schooling in recent decades, but are also closely associated with the rise in values such as self-reliance, socioeconomic success, and competitiveness in education—the main features defining the neoliberal framework for valuing education identified in Chapter 5.

The current degraded status of state schooling is in striking contrast to the vision of state schooling of those interviewees who entered the education system before the educational reforms of the early 1980s. Marta, a lawyer trained at UCH who did her schooling during the 1970s, represents one of them. Marta straightforwardly acknowledges that ‘I owe everything to state education’. In sharp contrast to the view conveyed by both Ana and Héctor, Marta admits to be both ‘grateful’ and ‘proud’ of her state schooling. For Marta and my older interviewees, state education was the best option at their disposal. Importantly, this was not just because state education was free, though that certainly mattered. As I highlighted in Chapter 5, the broad public tradition tied to *liceos* represented both a potent cultural repertoire to make sense of the progress of the nation and the pathway to achieve upward mobility.¹⁰⁹ It is to this wider tradition of state schooling to which Marta still feels attached. But Marta’s sense of recognition and pride of her state schooling is virtually absent among the very few interviewees who went to school in the state sector after the educational reforms of the 1980s.

Yet if the waning of state education has become both real and tangible, the ability of voucher schools to provide concrete routes of upward mobility for students from disadvantaged backgrounds still remains highly uncertain. For all the initial promises of greater freedom of choice and an improvement of quality of education through voucher schooling, this option is, on average, only marginally better than state schools in terms of their performance (Carnoy and McEwan 2003; Contreras *et al.*, 2010; Mizala and Torche, 2012; though see Patrinos and Sakellariou 2011). Ana bitterly recognises this throughout our conversation:

¹⁰⁹ Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, the few students from disadvantaged backgrounds who, like Marta and my older interviewees, managed to remain and/or successfully navigate the educational system, state education, from pre-school to higher education, was their route to upward mobility. Still, as I noted in Chapter 5, it is important to underline that for much of this period very few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds completed their secondary schooling. In the 1960s the chances that children from lower class origins entering elementary school and subsequently reaching *liceos* were minimal, let alone achieving graduation from secondary education (Ponce de León, 2018).

despite her parents' effort 'to find the best school they could afford', the 'quality' of the voucher schools she attended 'was not very good'. For Ana, the 'good atmosphere' her mother cherished in private schooling did not imply a 'high-quality education' — one effectively paving the way for Ana and her fellow-students towards school success and upward mobility.

Standing out and Standing alone: Coming from a Disadvantaged

Background and Being Educationally Successful

For most interviewees, schooling became the place that crystallised the tensions between a project of upward mobility rooted in their families and the expectations of their broader social background. As I noted in Chapter 5, their childhoods were part of strict family organisation designed to ensure school success. This demanding orientation towards school performance, however, often put at risk their social integration with their peers. The tensions tied to being educationally successful from a disadvantaged background took two main variants across interviewees. The first, and predominant one, is associated with the clash between being an educational achiever and their peers who did not share or achieve the same goals. This occurs primarily to those adopting a *legitimist* stance towards upward mobility: interviewees coming from right-wing political or religious backgrounds and where invocation of merit and the acceptance of established social hierarchies occupies a central place. The other, less frequent though not less significant, concerns the increasing distance that interviewees' school success implies for their ties with their backgrounds of origin. This variant affects mostly those holding a *loyalist* stance, typically tied to families rooted in the working-class movement with left-leaning political inclinations (see Chapter 2).

Héctor's experience illustrates the first type of tension tied to being educationally successful from a disadvantaged background. Brought up in a household in which his schooling had a 'central place', Héctor stood out as strong student from an early age. 'For me going to school was fun', he initially recounts in nonchalant terms. 'I did well without studying, really', he further points out. Later on, Héctor admits that his parents, particularly his mother, supported his schooling on a daily basis, supervising his 'progress' and 'duties'. At school, Héctor recalls having 'both good and bad teachers, and some of them really pushed me to learn as I was a good student'. Importantly, the perception of Héctor as a fast learner relative to his peers by some of his schoolteachers was not devoid of strains. For Héctor, it was not easy to find the right balance between his academic inclinations and keeping good relationships with his peers at school. When I asked Héctor if he had any troubles while attending primary school, he replied:

'Well, I did not have many friends. I had only two friends, that is the truth. Looking back, I do not know why it was, but maybe the way children are, you know. But also, the culture...I think like there was a lot of envy. [My classmates] bullied me for being a good student. Not all the time, but that happened frequently enough.'

By highlighting being a 'good student' and the 'envy' this engendered on his classmates, Héctor gives voice to the discrepancy between his academic success at school and what he calls the prevalent peer-group 'culture' of his classmates. When I asked him about how he coped with these problems, Héctor readily admits that 'I fought a lot', he concisely remarked. 'I had to defend myself', he further explained after a brief pause. Héctor smiles while telling me this, as if trying to normalise what he lived through and his reaction to this; but I can hear the tension in his voice and feel the old distress associated with his struggles at primary school. For high achieving students like Héctor, there are indeed strong emotional difficulties involved in the process of forging an identity that is seen to be compatible with a successful pupil and one that is different from what is typical for someone from his social background (see Ingram, 2011; Reay, 2002).

Héctor's experience was far from unique. Feeling at odds with the prevailing environment at school and solitariness were common among interviewees. Echoing Héctor's experience at school, Ximena, an engineer from PUC who went through several voucher schools during her schooling, remembers feeling persistently ill at ease with her peers, both in terms of lifestyles and school expectations. Ximena acknowledges the difficult task of juggling the dissimilar expectations from home and from her peers at school: in the former, being a 'responsible' daughter and 'complying with her mother's and grandmother's demands for school success'; in the latter, the 'incomprehension' and 'isolation' of being an educational achiever amid fellow-students who were not similarly oriented to school success as she did. Revealingly, Ximena speaks of living in a continuous 'dissociation of environments' and the 'heavy and constant emotional labour' required to sustain that troublesome position at school. Much like Ana, this persistent lack of fit accompanied Ximena throughout all her schooling.

However, this conflict of expectations was not the only dynamic behind distressed schooling experiences and feeling out of place across interviewees. For a small sub-group of them, succeeding at school became problematic mostly as a result of severing ties with their group of origin: leaving former friends and communities behind (Hurst, 2007, p. 7; see also Reay, 2017). For them, their school was the place where their individual progress in education developed, whereas for most of their peers schooling represented an experience marked by disappointment or frustration. These interviewees were well aware—often painfully so—that their own individual success was accompanied by the failure of many to whom they felt attached, including family members or friends.

For Carmen, the doctor trained at UCH whom we met in Chapter 5, this became apparent at the moment of her transition to secondary education. In moving from the voucher primary school nearby her neighbourhood in Santiago's southern periphery to well-known *liceo emblemático* in the city centre, Carmen recalls:

'I was going to study to the city centre. I could see how the world was opening up to me. And my friends [*Carmen is referring to friends both from primary school and her neighbourhood*], who were already in the stage when, as teenagers, they begin to be more vulnerable to the social situation... you know, some dropping out of school, other girls getting pregnant, and it was then that I noticed for the first time my distancing from the neighbourhood, my neighbourhood [*emphasis in her voice*] ... Those were my friends. But we grew apart ... Our everyday life was lost.

Carmen thus conveys the tension arising in her journey through school between her success and the distance from her neighbourhood and the restricted opportunities of her former friends. Carmen uttered these last words — 'our everyday life was lost' — with undeniable regret, and in a way that is absent in Ana's or Héctor's memories of school. For Carmen, steeped in the enlightened working-class culture transmitted by her grandfather (see Chapter 5) and displaying a strong loyalist stance to upward mobility, it remains as a nagging remorse even to this day; it marks an escape which feels very close to a form of desertion or betrayal of peers who she still considers 'friends', but with whom she can no longer fully identify with (Lawler, 1999; Reay, 2017). But in a wider context in which *clases populares* have become increasingly stigmatised and schooling the site of active forms of 'socio-educational segregation' (Canales *et al.*, 2016a), Carmen's variant of the tension that comes from being educationally successful and from disadvantaged backgrounds represents a minority among interviewees.

In either of the two variants, however, standing out and standing alone at school comes with specific *gender* modulations. Compared to their male counterparts, female interviewees not only faced the pressure to perform well at school, but experienced stricter parental controls

at home as well. Indeed, their routines, emphasising self-restraint and safety, were mostly confined to a restrictive social space circumscribed to school and home alone—thus avoiding the risks of dangerous neighbourhoods, or those coming with an early exposure to sexual relations (e.g., teenage pregnancy). Catalina, the engineer from PUC we also encountered in Chapter 5, gives voice to this common experience among female interviewees: ‘I was brought up under a lot of overprotection ... [My family] did not even let me go rollerblading. I could never go out alone, never, impossible [*strong emphasis in her voice*]’.

Catalina’s experience largely resonates with Ana’s or Ximena’s. Yet their protective confinement to their homes often increased their solitariness and difficulties at school. Ana, for instance, underlines how her family’s ‘overprotection’ made it difficult for her to establish more friendships in and outside school: ‘I was not allowed to go out to play with friends in the neighbourhood...I not only felt bored, but also alone’, she admits. Unlike most female interviewees, their male counterparts, although similarly experiencing the strains of being educational achievers with less successful peers, were nevertheless able to socialise more freely with friends and neighbours, as well as to practice sports. Fernando, an economist from UCH we will meet at greater length in Chapter 8, recalls that in his childhood he ‘could always *jugar a la pelota* (play football)’ with his friends from his neighbourhood, but only insofar as that larger freedom did not compromise his educational performance. For many male interviewees, this allowed them to slightly reduce the tension they experienced at school. These findings thus reveal the *double-sided influence of gender norms* on mobility. Indeed, for women, gender norms can act simultaneously as a potent driver in the search for greater autonomy via education (as I showed in Chapter 5) but also making more troublesome that same quest throughout their upbringing and schooling.

Cultural Guides and the Fragility of School Success

Like the vast majority of interviewees, Ana's parents believed intensely in education as the key to ensure a better future for their children. But compared to families from more privileged backgrounds, Ana's parents faced their daughter's education with a set of *structured disadvantages*. In an educational system dividing schooling opportunities according to the income of each family, these disadvantages were critically linked to scarce financial resources. But beyond money, these disadvantages were also related to a history of previous educational failure experienced by parents, a low sense of confidence in and/or entitlement towards schoolteachers, limited information and knowledge about the inner workings of the school system, and a reduced pool of social networks to mobilise in favour of their children (see, e.g., Reay and Ball, 1997; Reay, 1998; Ball, 2003).

Although Ana's father had completed his secondary education, he confined himself to the role of breadwinner, remaining ambivalent about her daughter's chances to succeed academically. With incomplete primary education, her mother provided continuous emotional support, scraped, and saved to buy Ana clothes and books—all indispensable elements to keep her afloat under a difficult schooling experience. Yet lacking the savvy about the educational system, Ana's mother could not offer her daughter a clear orientation to ensure school success or a well-worn path to higher education.

In such circumstances, not uncommon among interviewees, Ana was 'lucky' to find what she called '*una referente*' (a role model) in a neighbour. This figure, who also happened to be a schoolteacher, soon became key in Ana's schooling. 'We were very close when I was little', Ana recalls. 'She was organised and inspiring, and we often did the homework together. She was very helpful. I admired her a lot'. This figure offered the necessary structure and skills

for school success and strengthened Ana's aim to achieve academically—resources and guidance she could not fully find in her parents. Helping Ana on how to study and encouraging her, this neighbour intervened as an important 'cultural guide' (Lareau 2015).¹¹⁰ So much so that, by the end of primary school, Ana was coming first or second in her class. 'I remember that my head-teacher told me at some point: "if you want to, you can be the first in the class". And that was a great motivation for me', she underlines. For Ana, this figure was not just a guidance of how to perform well at school. In so doing, this role model also offered a shelter for Ana to affirm her more strongly her identity as an educational achiever: 'She gave me confidence in myself, despite my social difficulties at school', Ana further points out.

Benefitting from helping hands outside their nuclear families was not infrequent for interviewees. A particular uncertain moment many faced related to the transition from primary to secondary schooling. At this crucial junction, Héctor was confronted with the lack of know-how in his nuclear family. Despite Héctor's troubles at school, his parents, not knowing what alternatives to explore, remained unsure about the possibilities for his son in a better school. At this stage, it was vital the intervention of an extended kin. In Héctor's words:

'I remember it was one aunt, my paternal aunty, who was then finishing her technical secondary schooling. At the time, she used to come to our home from time to time. We were close. I remember she told my parents that I had *dedos para el piano* (literally 'fingers to play the piano', referred in this case to academic talent). [...] I do not know how she knew about it, but she was the one who suggested, actually encouraged, my parents to apply to [*liceos*] *emblemáticos*.'

¹¹⁰ In her initial formulation, Annette Lareau (2015, pp.19-20) defines 'cultural guides' as those figures outside the family (e.g., school counselor, university friends, or co-workers) who provide indispensable knowledge to the upwardly mobile to navigate key institutional steps (e.g., application to university, tips concerning how to study, opening the doors for graduate training) throughout their trajectories.

Conscious of the difficulties her son was experiencing at school and emboldened by the recommendations made by this paternal aunt, Héctor's mother applied to different *liceos emblemáticos* for a place for her son. In sharp contrast to the attitude deployed by Héctor's mother, his father remained 'mistrustful'—as Héctor put it—about his son's prospects to enter a selective and prestigious state secondary school. 'During the application process, I still remember my dad said to me: "do not have any illusions". He was mistrustful (...) My dad *no me puso las fichas* (did not bet on me)', Héctor emphatically recounts.

The father's 'mistrustful' attitude towards the application of his son to *liceos emblemáticos* can be seen as part of his own prior educational experience shaped by frustration, and the resulting deep ambivalence about the educational prospects for his children. This occurred in many families of my interviewees: although they deeply valued education as the best way to provide their children a better future, many — like Héctor's father—were also haunted by their own past of failure with education and a low sense of entitlement towards the functioning of the school system. When that mistrust prevails, it represents well what Bourdieu (1962, pp. 36-8; 1966, p. 332) depicts as the 'call to order' by the group of origin—a pressure to adjust their 'subjective expectations' to their 'objective chances' to succeed in the educational system. As such, this remains a strong indication of the fragility of the project of upward mobility, even for those who are successful in education. Fortunately for Héctor, his mother's initiative prevailed over his father's doubts, and their son was accepted in a *liceo emblemático*. Significantly, however, none of this would have happened without the prescient intervention of Héctor's paternal aunt: she offered knowledge and encouragement—'small' or 'hidden' resources (Pasquali 2014), often key for disadvantaged families—that his parents could not give.

Schoolteachers were also significant figures outside the nuclear family. Paula, a lawyer from UCH, highlights the role of the schoolteachers at a low-status inner-city state school where she was enrolled for her secondary studies. Just as she did in primary school, Paula stood out as a very strong student at her underperforming secondary school. At her school, ‘good teachers’ were the exception rather than the norm. In this unpromising environment, however, her Spanish and history teachers had a ‘big influence’ for her. ‘[The Spanish teacher] was an example to follow’, Paula underlines. ‘Cultured’, ‘encouraging’ and with a commanding sense of ‘authority’, ‘he believed in his role in public education, despite its current state’. Along with the history teacher, they not just widened Paula’s cultural horizons, but repeatedly suggested law as the best career choice to pursue after secondary school—both for meeting Paula’s talents and achieving economic rewards and stability. ‘They were actually quite important for me in conceiving the possibility of studying law’, Paula acknowledges. The positive rapport and empathy Paula established with these schoolteachers created strong bonds: ‘alongside my family, they were a constant source of support’, Paula conveys.

The assistance provided by others beyond the nuclear family was similarly crucial for the transition to post-secondary education. Alejandra, a lawyer trained at UCH who did her schooling at voucher schools in a provincial town in the north of Chile, serves to underline this type of support. At the end of her secondary studies, Alejandra obtained outstanding scores in the test granting access to higher education. Yet without any professionals in her family, she remained unsure as to what career to apply for and how to do this. At this particularly uncertain crossroads, Alejandra was advised to apply to law by the school director. As neither Alejandra nor her mother were well informed about this procedure, the school director, acting as a ‘cultural guide’ (Lareau, 2015), actively intervened in the application process. Echoing what happened to Paula, this school director underscored the

economic rewards associated with studying law, convincing Alejandra that this was her best option. With this timely involvement, Alejandra managed to apply, and gain access to the Faculty of Law at UCH.

The significance of cultural guides can also be highlighted by their absence. The case of Antonio provides a telling counterexample. Brought up by a single-mother, Antonio learnt to be self-reliant from an early age, navigating his neighbourhood's 'street codes' in the city-port of Valparaíso, and working to contribute to the meagre and unstable family income. Like Paula, Antonio attended low-status state schools, describing himself as a 'mediocre student'. The stamp of his schooling was the lack of any concrete guidance within and outside his nuclear family—a 'forced self-sufficiency' accompanied by a 'low self-esteem', and the companionship he found in his 'street mates', by whom he was introduced to drugs and drinking at an early stage. Without any relevant figure encouraging or helping him to navigate his schooling, Antonio obtained very poor outcomes in the test granting access to higher education. After these disappointing results, however, Antonio was put back on track by the key support he found in a schoolteacher and in a friend who was a top student; both played an indispensable part in assisting him to prepare once again the test granting access to higher education.¹¹¹

For most interviewees and their nuclear families, the help they received from 'cultural guides' (e.g., schoolteachers, extended kin, school directors) was vital to diminish the uncertainty they faced and the lack of know-how in their families at pivotal moments in their schooling. The multifaceted support (e.g., helping them on how to study, broadening their cultural

¹¹¹ With the help provided by these figures Antonio could not reverse entirely a previous school performance marked by mediocre results, but he managed to enter a less prestigious university for post-graduate training in engineering. Antonio was one of the two interviewees in my sample who did not pursue his undergraduate studies at UCH or PUC. Later on, he developed a startling professional career in the copper industry and undertook a MBA at PUC.

horizons, suggesting options for post-secondary study) offered by these figures acted as ‘hidden’, proxy sources of capital (cf. Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Jackson and Marsden 1962; Pasquali 2014). Significantly, they altered the tenuous link between the ‘objective chances’ and ‘subjective expectations’ (Bourdieu 1962: 36-8; see also Bourdieu and Passeron 1970: 103n5, 159, 221ff) shaping the fragile and contingent educational prospects of interviewees, in favour of their school success and upward trajectories.

Liceos Emblemáticos: Standing out Together

Alongside the role played by cultural guides, *liceos emblemáticos* are another powerful driving force underpinning the schooling experience and prospects of interviewees. Their specific role and significance for upward mobility, as I noted in Chapter 2, can only be fully understood by placing them within the broader educational field in Chile. *Liceos emblemáticos* have historically constituted the principal channel in the formation of the elite in politics, academia, sciences, arts, and the liberal professions. If initially confined to the established elites, these institutions increasingly opened up their doors to students from middle-class backgrounds in the course of the twentieth century, gradually acquiring a reputation for meritocratic mobility (Serrano *et al.*, 2018). Rooted in this long and rich history as pre-eminent educational institutions in the Chilean educational field, *liceos emblemáticos* are endowed with a distinctive cultural and socialisation ethos—often crystallising in what Bourdieu (1989, p. 101) calls ‘esprit de corps’—carrying the embodied mark of elite schooling.

To be sure, *liceos emblemáticos* have also suffered the impact of the educational reforms implemented since the 1980s, and the declining status of state education among the wider population. But anchored in their long-standing tradition of excellence and selectivity in the

public sector, they have retained a much higher demand and respect than ordinary state schools. Significantly, both in terms of public visibility and access to elite universities, *liceos emblemáticos* remain the only state schools still rivalling the exclusive network of private schools where the offspring of the upper middle- and upper classes are educated (Fontaine and Urzúa, 2018).¹¹²

Héctor's landing at Instituto Nacional (IN, hereafter)—the leading school among *liceos emblemáticos* (see Chapter 3)—is a telling tale of how these institutions shape both the opportunities to reach top universities and the way my interviewees face the tensions tied to their upward trajectories at school. Héctor describes his arrival at IN in the following terms:

‘From the first day at [Instituto] Nacional, they tell you that this is *el primer foco de luz de la nación* (the first lighthouse of the nation), the best school in the country. They tell you about the presidents, the politicians, the heroes trained in these classrooms. It is a special mystic. *Te ponen la camiseta* (they put the shirt on you), and you also do it [...] And from the first day it is also clear that you are expected to enter the best universities. The [Instituto] Nacional was the door to go to Universidad de Chile. [...] There is a culture of success, academic above all, you feel that immediately. They make it clear that this is what matters.’

Academically, in contrast to what Ana and Paula experienced at their schools, it was absolutely clear for Héctor that at IN ‘the expectation was to study at the best universities’. Héctor admits having ‘excellent teachers’, some of them combining teaching at IN and at universities. Héctor recalls schoolteachers reinforcing the mission of the school to prepare students for the most prestigious universities and selective careers within them—usually restricted to the choice of medicine, law or engineering—, as well as to train ‘leaders’ and

¹¹² Among private schools, a recent study identifies 18 ‘elite’ institutions in Chile, of which only two are male-attended *liceos emblemáticos* — Instituto Nacional and Liceo Héctor Victorino Lastarría (UNDP, 2017, p. 398). Like *liceos emblemáticos*, all the elite private schools are located in Santiago. This outcome is part of a larger process in the privatisation of the educational preferences of the Chilean upper-middle classes and upper classes over the past decades. The current network of elite private schools represents a very small set of exclusive institutions, powerfully influencing the formation of business, professional, and academic elites (Capital, 2014; Seminarium, 2003; Zimmerman, 2019a). These private schools recruit their students from the upper-middle and upper classes, grouping them by similar cognitive abilities, beliefs, and economic resources (Thumala, 2007; Madrid, 2016; Méndez and Gayo, 2019).

‘bosses.’ Héctor admits that his initial adjustment ‘was not easy’ at IN; it was much more ‘demanding’ and ‘competitive’ than his previous school. ‘I remember that at primary school I never studied. I did not have habits of study’, he acknowledges. ‘The first years at [Instituto] Nacional, I had to learn to study, otherwise you risk being expelled. I had to study at least three hours a day in addition to attending to class’, he further comments.

Table V: Type of school enrolled by interviewees at secondary level

Type of school	Prevalence (N=60)
<i>Liceo emblemático</i>	18
Ordinary state school	19
Voucher school	23

Note: Calculations based on the information reported by interviewees

The new academic demands were closely tied to the discovery of ‘new social realities.’ By the time Héctor arrived at IN, this institution still offered, like other *liceos emblemáticos*, a space of encounter of wider social diversity in a highly segregated educational system (Bucarey *et al.*, 2014, pp. 43-46). ‘When I was at the school, students came from all around Santiago, but not many from the rich neighbourhoods, Héctor recounts. In a similar vein, Carmen, whom we have encountered in Chapter 5 and enrolled at Liceo 1 Javiera Carrera, another of the *liceos emblemáticos*, recalls having classmates from ‘diverse environments’, including ‘daughters of professionals’ and students ‘coming from wealthy areas’, as well as ‘poor ones’ like herself. Unlike Ana or Paula, both Héctor and Carmen learnt from their peers as much as from their schoolteachers (‘very intelligent people, who were the best students from the schools they attended before’, as Héctor puts it) and created lasting friendships in their *liceos emblemáticos*.

Paula's and Ana's experience at their state and voucher schools lies in stark contrast to that of Héctor's or Carmen's. Paula landed at a heavily stigmatised and underperforming state school. 'I came from a small state school, attended both by boys and girls, to a massive school attended only by female students from tough, really difficult backgrounds', she recalls. 'Many of them were involved in drugs from a very early age or came from families with a lot of violence', she further points out. 'It was traumatic'. In a context in which state schools regularly suffer from less adequate financial provision, a higher student-teacher ratio, less-experienced teachers, and a low curricular coverage (OECD and World Bank, 2009; see also Valenzuela and Sevilla, 2013), the challenges of a tough social adaptation to her new school also came with low academic expectations. Most of Paula's new fellow students were 'apathetic' to studying; their previous experiences at school were mainly fashioned by 'failure' or 'disappointment'. Unlike Héctor or Carmen, Paula had to build an identity as an educational achiever mostly against this educational context in which she found herself in.

If Ana did not experience the same stigmatisation at her voucher school, she does not conceal her 'disillusionment' about the quality of her schooling. Ana elicits that 'bad' schoolteachers were the norm, not the exception, at her school. 'My teachers were bad. I think I learned very little at school [*emphasis in her voice*]', she laments. 'I was methodical in studying to get high marks. And that was it'. In this uninspiring intellectual milieu, Ana highlights only two schoolteachers who left a mark in her: one in biology, the other in philosophy. While the former reinforced her choice for medicine as an option for higher education, the latter providing a 'critical, reflexive eye' to approach the world. But given the high teacher turnover at her school, both remained in the school only for a few years, and the influence of their teaching was ephemeral. Revealingly, her next biology teacher was 'so bad and monotonous' that Ana rapidly became hesitant about her initial enthusiasm for medicine.

In contrast to Ana's or Paula's wanting experiences at their schools, *liceos emblemáticos* offered Héctor and Carmen a well-trodden institutional path to the most selective universities. Héctor admits that all the savvy available at IN contributed to make a difference to achieve the best possible exam results and the highest rate of admission to top universities. 'They know how the system works, and they prepare you accordingly'. Héctor recalls schoolteachers reinforcing the mission of the school—portrayed as 'inspiring' and 'mystic'—and focused on reaching leading universities and academic programmes. Héctor, like many of his fellow-students, also benefited from his participation in several interschool competitions in robotics and computer programming, both in Chile and abroad. Carmen was similarly immersed in a comparably inspiring and ambitious academic environment at her *liceo* 1. For her, studying at this school not only implied sharing with fellow students oriented to school success and backed by high-quality teaching; it meant, too, an engagement with public affairs via her involvement in student politics — an inclination encouraged by her school.

Both Carmen and Héctor were systematically exposed to a highly distinctive educational ethos reinforcing disposition to self-accrue capital through 'hard work'; were involved in a wide range of extracurricular activities—from inter-school academic competitions to student politics—; and mingled with school mates who assumed access to top universities and share with them the cultural norms more closely related to elite values *and* meritocratic mobility. Built on a long-standing tradition of excellence in the public sector organised around salient *republican* and *meritocratic* script, *liceos emblemáticos* thus not only transmit to their pupils a wide set of resources, unavailable in their own families, which are relevant for affirming their school success and upward trajectories over the life-course (see Chapter 7 and 9). These educational institutions also provide a good illustration of what Naudet (2018[2012]) calls

‘instituted ideology’: a mutually reinforcing convergence of the ideologies of their families and what was promoted by these schools, bolstering the school success of interviewees and placing their meritocratic success as part of a wider historical narrative.

Nothing remotely matching these rich and vibrant intellectual environments was available at voucher or ordinary state schools. Like Ana or Paula, students attending these institutions experienced their education with a mixture of hope, fear, and melancholy (Canales *et al.*, 2016b). For them, gaining admission to higher education, let alone reaching elite universities, remained a very distant option.¹¹³ Ana and Paula were well aware of this, and both emphasised how schoolteachers and staff at their schools did not create ‘excessive expectations’—as Ana calls them—about the pupils chances of postsecondary education. Paula underlines that students of state schools also bear the sturdy stigma linked to low-status state schools, and how she and her fellow students were ‘painfully conscious’ from an early age that the opportunities to prepare for university or to train for the prestigious occupations were minimal. Their schooling experience was marked by the adjustment of their ‘subjective expectations’ to their low ‘objective chances’ of school success (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970).

Against this bleak educational backdrop, as secondary school was coming to an end Ana and Paula increasingly felt the pressure compensate for the academic deficits and find additional preparation to increase their chances to reach to higher education. Both were enrolled at a ‘*preuniversitario*’—private institutions offering specific training for the exams determining the access to university (OECD and World Bank, 2009).¹¹⁴ Ana was supported by her parents,

¹¹³ At the schools where Ana and Paula were educated 28 percent and 22 percent, respectively, reached university in 2005 (Meneses *et al.*, 2010; more on this in Chapter 7); and when this happens, students trained at these type of schools mostly attend low-quality and less prestigious universities, professional institutes and technical training centres (UNDP, 2017, p. 307).

¹¹⁴ Over the past decades, *preuniversitarios* have considerably expanded in Chile. Although there is no systematic

but at the cost of assuming an important debt; Paula obtained a partial grant thanks to her outstanding performance at school. As both Ana and Paula recognised, attending *preuniversitarios* was indispensable for improving their slim chances of reaching higher education, though this could not fill all the gaps of their prior academic training.

Ana obtained good scores on the exam determining the access to university but not good enough to apply to medicine at a top university. Ana recalls her parents were ‘very disappointed’, and she admits having felt ‘utterly lost’. At this difficult episode in her life, it was key the intervention of a friend who recommended Ana to undertake studies in engineering at a less prestigious university. After gaining confidence in higher education, the following year she applied and was accepted at UCH. Far from a straightforward linear process through which social mobility is commonly studied, Ana lived her transition to higher education as a road saturated by uncertainty, setbacks, and diversions. As she explains this to me, Ana tries to retain her composure, but I can still feel the old pain in both her face and voice. Significantly, along with another classmate, Ana was the only student from her voucher school to reach an elite university in her cohort.

Héctor’s transition to university was quite different. With the clear choice of pursuing engineering at UCH since the beginning of his studies at IN, learning from similarly talented peers, and guided by his schoolteachers, Héctor obtained the maximum score in the maths exam allowing access to university. When I asked him about his achievement, Héctor succinctly but tellingly remarked: ‘it was something expected’. ‘In my cohort [from Instituto Nacional]’, Héctor further comments, ‘I entered Beauchef [as the campus where the Faculty

research on the role exerted by *preuniversitarios* (e.g., Eyzaguirre and Le Foulon, 2002; Williamson and Rodríguez, 2010), it is reasonable to assume that these (mostly privately-run) institutions are yet another factor of segregation in the highly unequal Chilean educational system.

of Engineering at UCH is located and known] with nearly twenty other *institutos*'. Thus, unlike the crucial but highly contingent help Ana received from cultural guides, Héctor benefitted from the confidence of belonging to an elite school (symbolic capital), a robust and shared meritocratic narrative (cultural repertoire) and travelling companions (social capital). If Ana's experience navigating school was marked by the troublesome tension of standing out and standing alone, IN gave Héctor and his fellow students the opportunity to *stand out together*. Importantly, as I explore in Chapter 7, all these differences matter for their subsequent adjustment to elite universities.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined how interviewees and their families navigate the educational system. I have shown how this experience is critically shaped by the new educational field created by the educational reforms of the early 1980s, and powerfully restructuring the way disadvantaged families relate to schooling. This momentous institutional re-orientation, organised around the introduction of a per-student voucher payment and the freedom of families to attend any school, swiftly gave rise to a highly privatised and segregated educational system. Against this specific backdrop, I characterised the troublesome experience of navigating the educational system for my interviewees as one of *standing out* and *standing alone*, but also pondering the influence of gender, cultural guides, and different school pathways for tempering a difficult, fragile, and uncertain school experience. In particular, I argued that, by altering the tenuous link between the 'objective chances' and 'subjective expectations' (Bourdieu, 1962, pp. 36-8) of school success among interviewees, both cultural guides and *liceos emblemáticos* act in favour of their upward trajectories.

These findings contribute to existing research in at least two main areas. Firstly, they highlight the role of specific educational institutions for upward mobility. Built on a longstanding tradition of educational excellence structured around a salient *republican* and *meritocratic* script, the ability of *liceos emblemáticos* to pass on multiple resources for mobility is rooted in the leading position they still occupy within the Chilean educational field. The resources these institutions transmit to students from disadvantaged origins certainly include valuable forms of cultural and social capital (Jack, 2014, 2019). But *liceos emblemáticos*, unlike ordinary state or voucher schools, also offer a potent cultural repertoire for upward mobility—an aspect largely overlooked by existing research (more on this in Chapter 7 and 9).

Secondly, my findings indicate that the role of cultural guides is far more complex than originally stated (Lareau, 2015). The intervention of these key figures includes a *larger array of actors*, such as extended kin, schoolteachers, school directors. Cultural guides are also characterised by the provision of a *multidimensional* support to the upwardly mobile—helping them on how to study, broadening their cultural horizons, guiding the application process, and suggesting options for post-secondary study—and acting as hidden or proxy forms of capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Jackson and Marsden, 1962; Pasquali, 2014). Finally, cultural guides are of far greater significance for students from disadvantaged origins attending dominated educational institutions (e.g., voucher or ordinary state schools) than those enrolled at schools providing a well-trodden institutional channel to elite universities (e.g., *liceos emblemáticos*).

Chapter 7.

Encountering the World of the Elites: Struggling with Class Marginality at UCH and PUC

Introduction

In the early 2000s, after more than a decade of unprecedented economic prosperity and expanding educational opportunities in Chile, Jaime, María, and Pedro, three adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds, started their undergraduate studies in the most selective and renowned disciplines in higher education: engineering, medicine, and law (Villalobos *et al.*, 2020). Yet contrary to the bulk of lower-middle and lower class students attending the recently created universities that massified the supply of higher education since the 1980s (UNDP, 2017, p. 307; Gambi and González, 2013; Torres and Zenteno, 2011), Jaime, María and Pedro landed at the nation's leading academic institution within Chile's higher educational field: Universidad de Chile (UCH, hereafter) and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC, hereafter).

For Jaime, María, and Pedro gaining admission to UCH and PUC meant encountering the world of the elites. Both UCH and PUC, as I noted in Chapter 3, have been the principal institutional channels in the making of the elites throughout Chile's modern history. Founded in 1842, UCH's salient features have been its secular, positivist, and professional bent. While initially being the exclusive domain of the upper classes, over the course of the twentieth century UCH gradually opened its doors to the middle classes, shaping a 'culture of

competition’ between those coming from elite backgrounds and outsiders (Brunner, 2012). Although created in 1888, PUC only gained national prominence in the second half of the twentieth century, and particularly since the neoliberal reforms of the mid-1970s. Unlike UCH, PUC is characterised by its confessionalism, aristocratism, and sense of social distinction closely tied to Chile’s Catholic elite—featuring a ‘culture of sponsorship’ for those coming from non-elite backgrounds (Ibid.).

For Jaime, María, and Pedro, as I underlined in Chapter 6, arriving at these elite universities was far from self-evident. Like the vast majority of interviewees, no one in their nuclear or extended families had attended university before them. None of them had pursued their secondary studies at a *liceo emblemático*—the still respected secondary state schools boosting the access to higher education. All three came to the most selective universities with an insufficient academic preparation and little or inexistent parental savvy to help them navigate 7-year long undergraduate programmes. At these elite institutions they were exposed, for the first time, to the ‘world of the elites’, which confronted them with their own ‘lack of world’. While this encounter opened up new horizons and opportunities, it also engendered lingering experiences of acute doubts and uncertainty about their academic abilities and social skills.

For Jaime, María, and Pedro, gaining admission to UCH and PUC forced them to confront their class marginality. As I explore in the following pages, this class marginality was underpinned by interactions marked by repeated incidents of class discrimination and stigmatisation, functioning as boundary-marking, liminal experiences. These problematic experiences showed Jaime, María, and Pedro that, even if they formally share a common ground with those hailing from privileged backgrounds as university students, the elites continue to belong to a different world—economically, culturally and socially—set apart from their own. But in a parallel process, Jaime’s, María’s, and Pedro’s landing at UCH and

PUC also meant distancing from their own families, in whom they could not find much support or understanding of the challenges they were living through at higher education. They thus faced a gradual but steady *dislocation* between their ties of origin and those of destination—one disrupting their worldviews and sense of self-identification.

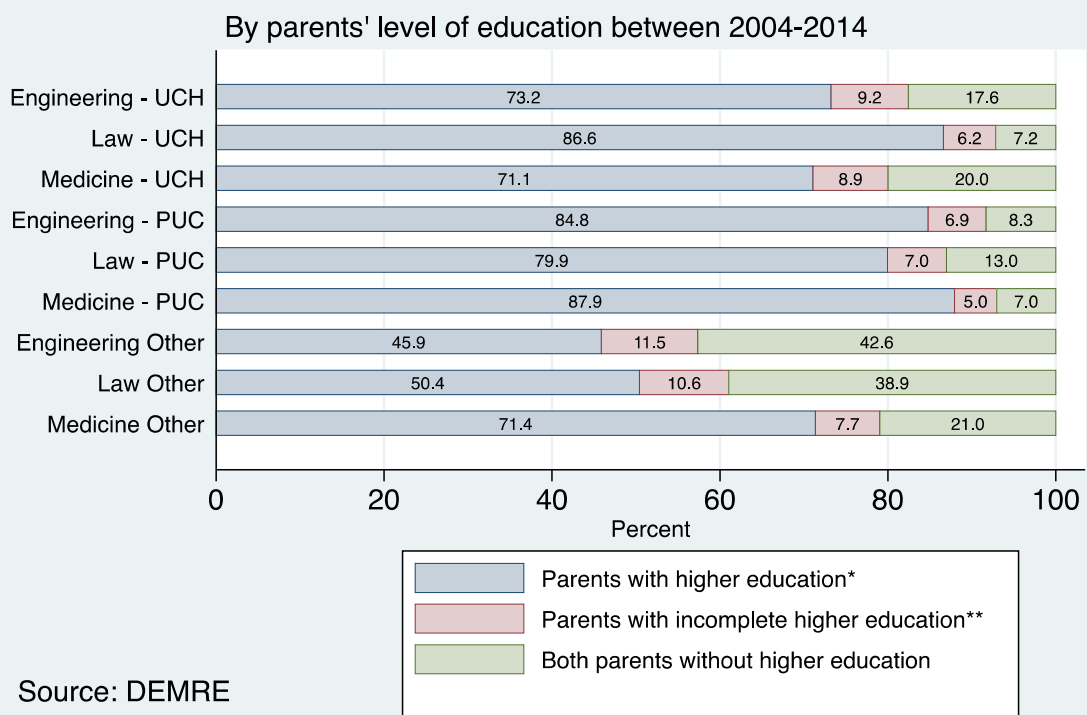
In this chapter, I examine how interviewees adjust and navigate UCH's and PUC's elite academic programmes: law, medicine, and engineering. In dialogue with a large Bourdieu-inspired literature (*inter alia*, Aries and Seider, 2005; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Bergerson, 2007; Hurtado and Carter, 1997; Lehmann, 2007; Ostrove and Long, 2007; Pascuali, 2014; Reay *et al.*, 2009; Torres 2009; Walpole, 2003), I reveal how class marginality is compounded by their relative lack of resources and (re)created by *combined* and *cumulative* experiences of class stigmatisation and discrimination. But I also show how this experience *varies* depending on the academic programmes in which first-generation students pursue their undergraduate studies, their gender, and the influence of different secondary schools in their adjustment to higher education. While uncovering this variability, I argue that the way class marginality is experienced at UCH and PUC is better understood by the notion of 'assaults on worth' (Lamont *et al.*, 2016) rather than the Bourdieusian concept of 'symbolic violence'.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I address the ways in which class marginality is experienced at both UCH and PUC. Secondly, I show how class marginality differs across high-status academic disciplines. Thirdly, I analyse how the adjustment to elite universities differs depending on the gender of interviewees. Fourthly, I examine how the different secondary schools that interviewees attended play a significant part in their adjustment to top universities. Finally, I summarise my main findings and provide some concluding remarks.

‘Their World’ and ‘the Lack of World’: Discovering the Elites at UCH and PUC

The arrival of Jaime, María, and Pedro to UCH and PUC immediately confronted them to the underrepresentation of first-generation students like themselves and the overrepresentation of students whose parents already hold higher education studies. Figure I clearly indicates that, both at UCH and PUC, first-generation students are consistent minorities across the three most coveted academic disciplines in Chile. Indeed, their participation oscillates around a meagre 10 percent, with the exception of medicine and engineering at UCH, which reach 20 and 18 percent, respectively.

Figure I: Percentage of students enrolled in high-status academic programmes



Significantly, Jaime’s, María’s, and Pedro’s landing at UCH and PUC was experienced as an exposure to a ‘*nuevo mundo*’ (new world) hitherto unbeknownst to them. For them and the

vast majority of interviewees, their contact to this ‘new world’—experienced by the hierarchical and normative influence exerted by the elites—went hand in hand with a sudden and difficult awareness of their own *‘falta de mundo’* (lack of world) closely tied to their backgrounds of origin.¹¹⁵ Under such conditions, their first encounters interviewees had with students from privileged backgrounds at UCH and PUC are marked by closely intertwined cultural and social troubles.

One of the first challenges that became apparent for interviewees concerned their academic performance. Jaime’s entrance at the Faculty of Engineering at PUC is telling of the type of academic difficulties most first-generation students face during their first months at elite universities. In trying to explain his troubles, Jaime says: ‘I felt very insecure and lonely during my first year’. Initially he had the company of a student graduated from the same low-quality voucher school where he was educated. But after a few months, this travelling companion dropped out of his university studies, leaving Jaime on his own. Jaime felt at a strong academic disadvantage compared to his privileged peers at PUC (González *et al.*, 2005). Jaime particularly struggled with Calculus (‘I did not even know how to derive’, he told me) and Geometry—a course which he failed during his first semester. ‘I used to cry at home before an exam because I couldn’t understand, feeling I was never going to be able grasp [the course contents]’. Significantly, Jaime was not just feeling insecure about this knowledge in relation to the knowledge and skills of his peers. As a result of his academic strains, he was also doubting his own ‘abilities’: ‘I began to question my abilities. I doubted whether I was really able to overcome my deficiencies’, he recounts.

¹¹⁵ Similar findings are reported at elite universities in the US (Curl, 2013; Jack, 2019), Britain (Jackson and Marsden, 1962; Reay *et al.*, 2009), and France (Bourdieu, 1989; Naudet, 2018[2012]; Pasquali, 2014).

A similar experience shaped Pedro's arrival at the Faculty of Law at UCH. Much like Jaime, Pedro recalls his first semester as being 'very difficult'. For Pedro, who grew up in a poor family living in a small provincial town in Chile's Central Valley, the Faculty of Law was an unfamiliar cultural milieu. 'It was a new world, really', he tells me. Pedro points out his insufficient command of the cultural behaviours that mould university life on a daily basis: he had a 'different way of behaving', a regional accent, and 'flaws' in his grammar—wider cultural disparities to which he had to 'assimilate' and 'adjust' even if he did not want to (e.g., Bourdieu, 1989, p. 147). Pedro also felt a strong anxiety about the gap between the academic level of his new teachers and peers and his own academic competence: 'At first I just thought everyone was simply more able or knowledgeable than me.'¹¹⁶

Similar difficulties were reported at the Faculty of Law, PUC. Catherine, educated at low-quality voucher schools in Santiago, struggled to adapt herself to the dominant cultural norms at PUC. In particular, she experienced a sharp discontinuity between her evangelical upbringing and the predominant Catholic culture at the Faculty of Law.¹¹⁷ Like everyone else, Catherine was expected to follow Catholic prayers at the beginning of each lecture. 'I remained silent. But everyone else was praying, except for a few students, the atheists', she tells me. 'I still remember that: I still feel the pressure, not explicitly, but still there. It was awkward'. Part of Catherine's strains are evidently related to the strength of the specific cultural ethos shaping PUC, especially strong at the Faculty of Law. But more broadly, she also gives voice to a larger sense of strangeness and discomfort that most first-generation students from underprivileged origins go through when encountering the cultural practices

¹¹⁶ For similar findings, see Canales and Ríos (2009) in Chile and Reay *et al.*, (2009, pp. 1112-1113) for the British case.

¹¹⁷ Catherine's family is part of an increasingly large proportion of Chilean families from the lower classes which have abandoned Catholicism in favour of evangelical pentecostalism in recent decades (see Corvalán, 2009; Fediakova and Parker, 2009).

preponderant at elite universities (e.g., Granfield, 1991; Ostrove and Long, 2009; Torres, 2009). Like Pedro, she, too, experienced what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic violence’: being compelled to see and adjust her life to the values and practices of the elites prevailing at top universities (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970).

Echoing Jaime’s experience, Catherine also struggled academically at PUC. In the most demanding course of her first year, ‘Philosophical Foundations of Law’, she failed her first oral examination. Reflecting back on this episode and her wider lack of preparation for university, Catherine bitterly recalls: ‘Not even the newspaper was read in my house. So, I did not do it either (...) My lack of cultural capital was supposed to be compensated with good marks. And I was falling with that, too’.¹¹⁸ Yet what made matters worse for Catherine was her mother’s reaction to the disappointing academic news. Accustomed to see her daughter excel at the voucher schools she attended and deeply unaware of the study requirements at university level, Catherine’s mother thought she was simply not taking her studies seriously. ‘My mom said to me: this is it! Why did you study this if you are not up to it, not capable? You are a fool!’. As a result, like many other first-generation students, Catherine—not being able to fit in academically at PUC *and* without much understanding or support in her own family—experienced not only strong feelings of intimidation but also an increasing sense of loneliness at university (cf., Aries and Sider, 2005). Catherine’s case is thus indicative of the way interviewees become aware of the larger class disparities they experience at the elite universities; but also, how, in confronting them, they experience a mounting sense of social and cultural disruption regarding their ties of origin.

¹¹⁸ Significantly, Catherine makes an explicit association between a deficient ‘cultural capital’ tied to her upbringing and how this hampered her ability to perform well at the Faculty of Law (e.g., Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

Jaime's, Catherine's and Pedro's academic troubles largely reflect the experiences of the vast majority of interviewees. There are substantial inequalities between private-paid secondary schools, especially elite ones in Santiago, and voucher or state secondary schools (UNDP, 2017, pp. 298-305). These inequalities concern lingering disparities in terms of educational quality and attainment. The most important gap, as Jaime's friend from secondary school exemplifies, lies in the possibility of completing university studies—only 11 percent of the lower strata complete university studies, while 84 percent do so from the upper stratum (Ibid, p. 307). Disadvantaged students like Jaime, Catherine, or Pedro, experience strong and persistent doubts and uncertainty at university (Leyton *et al.*, 2012). And those who manage to overcome their academic difficulties are, including interviewees, exceptions rather than the rule.

First-generation students at elite universities not only experience academic challenges, but *social* ones as well (e.g., Aries and Seider 2005; Reay *et al.*, 2009). During their first years at university what was immediately apparent to them was that their struggles with academic uncertainties went hand in hand with the social segregation and isolation that most disadvantaged students confront at UCH and PUC. María, who arrived at the Faculty of Medicine at PUC from a voucher school located in a small provincial town, recalls being 'shocked' by the 'social differences' she encountered during her first days at university. María remembers being challenged 'for the first time in my life' by privileged peers 'coming to university with their own computers, in their cars, talking about their trips to Europe' (see Jack 2019, Ch. 3). María further remarked that her privileged peers, educated in a narrow circle of elite private schools, 'knew each other for a lifetime' and 'lived in their own world'. Under such conditions, María—like most interviewees—managed to forge friendships with

students from a similar social background or who were also recipients of the financial aid provided by PUC.¹¹⁹

The experience of class marginality was not solely confined to PUC. Compared to the latter, UCH, a public and secular university, is usually described by both faculty and students as an institution that is more open and welcoming to undergraduates from diverse social backgrounds. Pedro unambiguously disagrees.¹²⁰ During his first semester at UCH, Pedro, close to left-wing political views and with literary inclinations, sought friendships among the ‘leftist people’ from privileged backgrounds predominating at the Faculty of Law. After participating in a few activities and sharing part of his social background with some of them, Pedro found out that his ‘progressive’ partners had organised a ‘public collection of funds’ for him without his knowledge or consent, and publicly revealed his identity. This situation wounded Pedro deeply: ‘I did not want their pity’, he clarifies, ‘nor to be relegated or stigmatised’. Pedro firmly rejected the ‘social tourism’ of his privileged peers.

‘I did not come to ask anything from anyone. I came to do my things because I wanted to be better than the context I had live before. I did not come to give them pity, or receive funds raised by people who discovered the existence of misery in books. I detest that form of *turismo social* (social tourism). I rather prefer *cagar meando solo*¹²¹ [*with strong emphasis and deep voice*].’

This unauthorised exposure of Pedro’s background and identity, even if there was no intention of harming him, was not only a break of the trust he had invested on his fellow

¹¹⁹ For similar findings at an elite university in Colombia, see Álvarez Rivadulla (2019).

¹²⁰ A recent study (Iglesias *et al.*, 2013) suggests that meritocratic discourses are highly prevalent at UCH, despite the fact that the socio-economic composition of the student body differs significantly from the that of the whole population. However, this research also indicates that those meritocratic discourses vary depending on the previous educational trajectory of students and the specific ways that researchers used to address meritocratic accounts from respondents.

¹²¹ Chilean expression with strong connotations; it can be approximately translated as ‘to be fucked-up on my own’.

students, but also a form of stigmatisation that lead him to being stereotyped. When I asked Pedro about the reasons behind this incident, he avoided further details but grimly said: ‘the Faculty [of Law at UCH] is classist, elitist.’ After this distressing experience, Pedro severed all relations with these students. As maintaining prior relationships from his provincial town—either with family or friends from secondary school—was difficult living in Santiago, all this amplified Pedro’s sense of isolation.

While not being an overt expression of class discrimination, Pedro’s aching incident is one of the many possible manifestations of class inequality that interviewees face at UCH and PUC. Significantly, as Table VI shows, this type of incident—being stereotyped by his class origins—and other closely related experiences of being misunderstood, over-looked, or underestimated—are the most frequently reported by interviewees throughout their higher education.

Table VI: Type and prevalence of class mistreatment at UCH and PUC

	Class discrimination*	Class stigmatisation**
UCH (N=30)	3,4 %	80 %
PUC (N=30)	10 %	86,7 %

Note: Percentages calculated on the basis of the type of class mistreatment reported by each interviewee.
 *Class *discrimination* includes overt or blatant expressions of class mistreatment, which are primarily concerned with ways of preventing or depriving access to opportunities and/or resources due to different class origins.
 **Class *stigmatisation* includes a wider range of phenomena beyond opportunities and resources, such as being misunderstood, over-looked, underestimated, or stereotyped (analytical distinction taken from Lamont *et al.*, 2016, p. 18)

Although many of these incidents bear the imprint of ‘symbolic violence’, I argue that these experiences of class mistreatment can be better understood as ‘assaults on worth’ (Lamont

et al., 2016, p. 6, 9, 18): episodes in which interviewees' sense of self and identity is challenged by being stereotyped, undervalued, or misinterpreted. Importantly, for interviewees, assaults on worth are not single event they experience at elite universities, but rather repeated incidents unfolding time and again throughout higher education. As such, assaults on worth operate in practice as boundary-markers, liminal processes: they separate first-generation students from their privileged peers. The ongoing nature of these incidents is therefore key to better understand how class marginality is lived at elite universities—experiences not just moulded by the lack of social and cultural resources, but also by wider 'recognition gaps' (Lamont 2018): a denied cultural membership and a devalued sense of self-worth closely linked to their class backgrounds (more on this below and in Chapter 8).

Like Pedro, the vast majority of interviewees faced abundant forms of class stigmatisation and class-based barriers thwarting their social integration at UCH and PUC. Three main interconnected trends underpin this. Firstly, most privileged students come from exclusive private secondary schools in Santiago or the main regional capitals (Mizala and Torche, 2012). As María indicated, they usually know each other before entering university and the integration to their social circles is highly unlikely for outsiders. Secondly, first-generation students typically work long hours to support themselves, which leaves them with little time to participate in social or recreational activities. Even though they desire to make friends, fit in, and have enriching social life at university, they simply do not have the time or resources to do so. Finally, Santiago's sharp residential segregation patterns (Sabatini *et al.*, 2001, 2010) makes even more problematic cross-class interactions. Unlike their wealthy peers residing in suburbs placed in the north-east sector of the capital, disadvantaged students live in the city centre or in peripheral neighbourhoods—making social intercourse outside university campuses difficult.

Class Marginality across Law, Medicine, and Engineering

Alongside these common trends shaping class marginality at UCH and PUC, there are important sources of variation across academic programmes. To be sure, elite academic programmes such as law, medicine, and engineering, encourage and demand a high academic performance from their students, which plays an important part in their adjustment to higher education. Yet at the same time, what counts as ‘fitting in’—the cultural markers required for obtaining academic recognition, the qualities needed to form good relationships with peers and faculty, the appropriate codes of behaviour and dress—varies across academic disciplines and institutional arenas (Bourdieu, 1989; see also Friedman and Laurison, 2019). How class marginality is experienced by first-generation students at UCH and PUC is therefore also dependent on the specific class-based and professional culture underpinning each academic discipline.

Historically, as I noted in Chapter 3, law sits at the apex in the scale of prestige among high-status occupations, as the career par excellence of the national elite. If the former impermeability of this profession has lost much of its previous force with the massification of the educational system in recent decades, its longstanding elitist tradition still persists at UCH and PUC. Compared to medicine or engineering, in law the cultural dimensions of class division are more salient. As I have already indicated with the experiences of Pedro and Catherine, at the Faculties of Law at UCH and PUC there prevails a distinctive code of behaviour encompassing comportment, bodily self-presentation, and the use of language—what Bourdieu (1986a) refers to as ‘embodied cultural capital’.

All this has important implications for the integration of outsiders. Indeed, during her first semester at PUC, Catherine—in addition to her academic and social difficulties—also

struggled with the pressing need to get the formal attire required for her oral examinations: '[taking the examinations with a formal attire] was not an explicit, regulated requirement but everyone complied with it. So, I had to as well', Catherine explains to me. 'I had to take [the oral examinations] carrying a handbag and during the winter with a coat and heels'. And after a pause, she adds: 'It was absurd. Even today I find it utterly absurd [*strong emphasis*] ... But I had to do it'.¹²² Alongside the wider cultural disparities to which she had already alluded to, Catherine underscores the specific bodily self-presentation requirements concerning how to carry oneself among the elites (cf. Kahn, 2011). Her account thus highlights not only her critical judgement regarding the use of a formal attire for her oral exams, but the concrete corporeal entanglements at stake in that process.

However, the cultural dimensions of class inequality confronted by interviewees studying law went far beyond issues of bodily self-presentation. Daniel, another student of law at UCH and previously educated at a voucher school, struggled mainly with the subtler, fine-grained cultural norms and hierarchies also prevalent at the Faculty of Law. Although Daniel did not enter law as a strong student, his subsequent good academic performance allowed him to become '*un ayudante*' (a teaching assistant)—a highly coveted position among high-performing students. In this select role, Daniel interacted mostly with fellow students from privileged backgrounds: those whose parents 'had PhDs from foreign universities', peers which spoke 'several languages at home', or 'played musical instruments all their lives', as he remarked.

¹²² Although recipient of financial aid for the tuition fees, Catherine lacked the money to get the formal attire required for her oral exams during first year. Squeezing the credit card now increasingly available to poor families in Chile (Marambio 2018), Catherine's mother bought the attire for her daughter but at the cost of assuming an important debt. This highlights how the social and cultural difficulties that first-generation students face at elite universities are very much tied to persistent economic strains.

Interacting with these peers, Daniel gradually discovered the more granular distinctions governing the upper echelons of the Faculty of Law at UCH. As time went on, Daniel distinguished a ‘traditional elite’—students educated in a very narrow circle of private schools in Santiago with whom he could interact but never become close friends with—and what he tellingly characterises as ‘*una elite más amable*’ (a kinder elite)—with whom he was able to develop some friendships. Significantly, however, in both cases Daniel felt his social integration was troubled by what he refers to as ‘a larger culture’. This larger culture was not only confined to knowledge in law, which he had successfully caught up with since his arrival to higher education.¹²³ But that larger culture also included both a broader and deeper understanding of ‘history, philosophy, and literature’. That vast array of knowledge remained elusive for Daniel; it was this realm of culture that he could not compensate for despite his willingness and best endeavours to do so.

Daniel’s case puts into stark relief how low stocks of dominant cultural capital hamper the ability of students from disadvantaged origins to integrate to elite circles in academic programmes such as law. The requirements prevailing in the faculties of law not just concern a specific comportment, bodily self-presentation, and use of language; they are also related to widely valued tastes and categories of judgement which Daniel encountered along with his privileged peers working with him as teaching assistants. Importantly, in addition to the academic and social barriers noted in the previous section, these expressions of dominant and embodied cultural capital make the integration of outsiders at the Faculties of Law at UCH and PUC even more difficult (see Table VI).

The relative strength of embodied cultural capital was less determinant in medicine. Although less honourable than law in its origins (see Chapter 3), throughout the twentieth century the

¹²³ For Daniel, his appointment as a teaching assistant tangibly recognises this.

medical profession rapidly acquired a prominent standing among elite professions, based both on the social prestige of its practitioners and a strong positioning towards public health issues (Illanes, 2010). Medicine combines a strong *scientific orientation* with a wider concern with *public health issues*—a mixture offering more chances for social integration for outsiders. Carmen, whom we met in Chapter 5 and have followed throughout subsequent chapters, gives voice to this trait. Like most interviewees, Carmen’s initial adjustment at the Faculty of Medicine at UCH was challenging. In particular, Carmen was struck by the persistent social segregation among students along class lines. The classrooms, she recalls, were ‘distributed’ according to the ‘social class’ of the student intake. ‘There were those with scholarships’, the ‘people from the provinces’, and a ‘blond spot [*with strong emphasis in her voice*].’—which is the expression Carmen uses to refer to her affluent peers, underscoring their characteristic ‘blond’ physical appearance.¹²⁴ ‘This remained like this for a lot of time’, Carmen further points out.

Table VII: Class marginality across high-status academic programmes.

	Law	Medicine	Engineering
Dominant form of cultural capital	Embodied cultural capital	Combination of embodied cultural capital and technical capital	‘Technical’ capital
Consequences	Greater barriers for integration of outsiders		Less barriers for integration of outsiders

¹²⁴ This remains as a powerful reminder of the impossibility of separating class analysis from ethnicity.

Yet by the time Carmen reached her clinical training in her third year at university, she felt much more at ease. Part of her greater sense of comfort was tied both to a gradual process of becoming accustomed to the life at a top university and the fact she enjoyed the direct contact with patients. But this also coincided with the massive student demonstrations against unequal higher education which shook the whole country in 2011 (see Chapter 4). Significantly, this made it possible for Carmen, steeped in the enlightened working-class culture transmitted by her paternal grandfather (see Chapter 5), to connect with what she calls ‘the social side of medicine’. Carmen along with similarly minded students, actively took part of the student protests. ‘During those years, I felt much more in my space’, she tells me. ‘We felt a moral responsibility to get ourselves involved in the movement, and also to rethink our role as students of medicine at a public university’, she recalls.

This ‘social side of medicine’ was also relevant to María at PUC. María faced a durable form of class marginality and cultural shock at the Faculty of Medicine. But, like Carmen, María slowly yet steadily found her way inside and outside of campus life. During her second year, she joined ‘*trabajos voluntarios*’ (student volunteering activities) related to medicine at PUC. ‘This was important for me’, she tells me, ‘to open up a bit more and also to connect with the public, social concern of doctors’. By her fourth year, María became a student representative, engaging herself, along with other students sharing her upward trajectory, in a student-run *preuniversitario* (see Chapter 6) for low-income secondary students living in deprived urban areas. Looking back, María says: ‘those experiences and the people I encountered, made me feel, in a way, that I was not a complete alien [at the Faculty of Medicine at PUC]’. To be sure, for María and Carmen, this acknowledgement did not change the fact that medicine was perceived as stronghold dominated by privileged students. But unlike those interviewees who studied law and largely due to this ‘social side of medicine’,

both María and Carmen eased their ways into the elite universities, thus lessening their class marginality.

Like medicine, engineering, too, offered students from disadvantaged origins a way to temper their class marginality. This was not so much related to the ‘social side’ of engineering, but rather to the *scientific* and *technical* imprint of this profession. Rodrigo, a student at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH in the mid-1990s, recalls: ‘at Beauchef what determines your credibility is your academic performance’. ‘If you are good at calculus, algebra, or physics, that is the basis for a good reputation. So, if you are good at maths, your life can be much easier’, he further comments. Significantly, unlike law, with its greater dependence on the multifaceted forms that embodied cultural capital can take, this much more clearly and narrowly defined standard of academic credibility in engineering—being ‘good at maths’—can ease the integration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. While this greater reliance on technical competences did not solve all of Rodrigo’s financial and social troubles in adjusting to UCH (more on this in Chapter 8), it did help him to navigate the challenges he and other disadvantaged students faced at the Faculty of Engineering. Importantly, too, the saliency of this criteria for mutual validation among peers was even the basis for some interviewees to consider the Faculty of Engineering at UCH as a ‘meritocratic’ place. This was the term used by Sofía, another student at the same Faculty, to describe her own experience as a first-generation student—a description none of those who studied law or medicine, either at UCH or PUC, ever made.

‘Being good at maths’ equally smoothed the academic and social adjustment at the Faculty of Engineering at PUC. Even though Jaime, whom we encountered earlier in this chapter, felt at great disadvantage compared to his privileged peers during his first year at university, once he improved his academic performance, he found it much easier to extend his initially

narrow social networks and to gain acceptance into group studies. ‘As time went by, I became more open to get to know other people, people different from myself’, Jaime tells me. ‘I am not saying that I became friends with *cnicos* (posh students)’, he clarifies. ‘My real friends were always other students, students like me. But I managed to be more open and interact with people from other [social] classes.’ When I consulted Jaime for the reasons behind this greater openness over time, he replied: ‘Well, I think it was in part because I became a strong student. Otherwise, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, really’. Like Rodrigo, ‘being good at maths’ contributed to diminishing over time the class marginality Jaime initially experienced at PUC.

The Gendered Modulations of Class Marginality

The class marginality that first-generation, low-income students confront at UCH and PUC not only differs across different academic programmes but also according to their gender. Although higher education enrolment has tended towards gender equalisation in recent decades, the presence of women at elite institutions is still relegated to subordinated positions in terms of visibility, power, and prestige. This is particularly the case in elite disciplines such as law, medicine, and engineering, which—as I noted in Chapter 3—have been historically dominated by high-status males.

Gender norms and gaps were strongly felt among interviewees. Evoking her first years at the Faculty of Medicine at PUC in the mid-1980s, Andrea refers to her ‘traumatic’ adjustment to university, both because of her class background and her gender. ‘It was totally ABC1 [classification used by marketing publicists targeting upper-middle- and upper-class customers]’, Andrea emphatically recounts, underlining a student body dominated by those from privileged backgrounds. But her unsettling landing at PUC was equally connected with

an ‘environment’ deeply marked by masculinity (c.f., Puwar 2004)): ‘we were 17 female students among 70 students or so’, Andrea recalls. ‘It was a phallic, aggressive, competitive environment’, she further points out. Andrea’s cultural and social adaptation to university was thus shaped by the combined impact of class and gender disadvantages.

For Andrea and many female interviewees, gender handicaps often assumed the form of gender discrimination. During the final years of her medical training at UCH in 2012, Carmen attended a seminar on traumatology—a medical specialty ‘dominated by males’, she tells me. On one occasion, Carmen, the only female student taking this small-size course, was the only student attending this seminar. The professor in charge arrived at the classroom, but when he saw that Carmen was the only student present, he left the room without providing any explanation. Some minutes later, the professor’s secretary appeared in the classroom and told Carmen that the professor would not give the seminar as she was the only student present. ‘His secretary did not mention that this was because of my gender’, Carmen tells me. ‘But the fact remained that this professor did not give the seminar and I was the only student, female student, there’, she further muses in retrospect. Carmen made sure to convey that this incident was an ‘unfair discrimination’. This was not only because Carmen never heard something like this happen to any male fellow student, but also because that attitude prevented her access to a seminar that she was officially entitled to. Despite the ambiguity that traverses it, this incident reflects well the type of gender discrimination commonly experienced by female interviewees at UCH and PUC.

However, although incidents of gender discrimination of this kind were fairly frequent, they do not form the most prevalent form of gender mistreatment at UCH and PUC (see Table VIII). Indeed, by far the most common forms of gender mistreatment were connected to gender stigmatisation. Rosa, a student of law at PUC in the early 2000s, tells me how several

of her male professors at that time openly and repeatedly questioned or degraded women's intellectual abilities, saying, for instance, that 'women only attended university to find a husband'. Remarks like these were pervasive. Carolina, a contemporary of Rosa's at the Faculty of Law at PUC, similarly recalls that in the classrooms 'the opinion of women just did not matter'. 'No one confronted this. It was just taken for granted. You just had to accepted it and carry on', she points out, emphasising the normalised force of gender norms. Equivalent vilifying comments, made both by authorities and faculty, were reported by female interviewees who studied law at UCH.

Table VIII: Type of gender mistreatment at UCH and PUC

	Male (N=30)	Female (N=30)
Gender discrimination*	Not reported	Frequent (43%)
Gender stigmatisation**	Not reported	Highly prevalent (93%) and varied: underestimation, stereotyping, neglect

Note: Type of gender mistreatment reported by each interviewee. *Gender *discrimination* include overt or blatant expressions of gender mistreatment and which are primarily concerned with ways of preventing or depriving access to opportunities and/or resources because of being female. **Gender *stigmatisation* refers to phenomena such as being misunderstood, over-looked, underestimated, or stereotyped.

Beyond these belittling commentaries, gender stigmatisation adopted more subtler, if insidious, expressions. Being ignored or looked over because of gender was also common in places like the Faculty of Law at PUC. This was indeed one of the salient points in our conversation with Rosa. Like many students from disadvantaged origins at elite universities (cf. Leyton *et al.*, 2012, p. 81), Rosa felt intense loneliness and bewilderment during her first years at university. But as time went on, this somewhat changed once she started to obtain good marks. 'I started to stand out from the second year onwards', she remarks. 'And

suddenly the *cnicos* (posh students) started to *pescarme* (take notice of her), ask for my notes and my approach to studying'. And, after a pause, Rosa emphatically tells me: 'Only then they found out I existed'.

Catherine, whom we have met earlier in this chapter, lived through a similar experience at the Faculty of Law at PUC. With few friends but still eager to integrate more with her peers, Catherine decided to join the '*trabajos voluntarios*' (volunteering activities) organised by students for the winter break. Initially, encouraged by a former boyfriend, she thought this was a great opportunity to engage with helping poor people in the northern regions of the country and interact with other students. But Catherine soon found out that the main purpose of these activities was not so much the voluntary work, but a time to socialise without the constraints the students faced in the capital. The dynamics structuring the social life of her privileged peers was highly unfamiliar and confusing for her: 'I tried my best to be friendly, but I could not fit in', she tells me. 'They all knew each other from their schools and spoke about people they knew ... I felt they were completely indifferent to my existence. I was invisible for them', Catherine further conveys.

Unlike Pedro's first incident at UCH, when he was stigmatised by being publicly stereotyped as a student from a disadvantaged background, Catherine and María underline the 'indifference' and 'invisibility' they lived through in their interactions with their privileged peers. Their experiences thus shed light to a different variant of 'assaults on worth' (Lamont *et al.*, 2016, pp. 28-29): those related with the lack of attention or neglect rather than aggression. These experiences of neglect reveal a particular form of class mistreatment that upwardly mobile women face in elite environments seems largely absent in existing research (for a partial exception, see Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). These incidents contribute to deepen the class marginality experienced by female interviewees like Catherine. Indeed, the

ten days Catherine spent in volunteering represented for her ‘what is at the heart of the PUC’. Using this specific incident, Catherine gives voice to a larger sense of misrecognition that she felt throughout her undergraduate studies: ‘it was simply not my place’, she asserts.

The prevalence of these forms of gender stigmatisation was even stronger in engineering, the archetypal male profession. ‘Everything revolved around men’, Francisca, a student at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH in the early 1990s, observes, referring both to the student body and to the faculty. Being overlooked or underestimated because of ‘being a woman’ was experienced on a daily basis inside and outside of the campus. Francisca still vividly recalls an incident she faced during her first years at UCH, almost thirty years ago: ‘I remember approaching a group of men who were talking about politics but then suddenly changed the topic when I joined them. I told them that I was interested in discussing politics with them’, she recounts. But ‘they simply laughed at me’, Francisca tells me, at once trying to convey the normalcy of what she lived at the time and the vexing uneasiness she felt and still feels about it today, thirty years on.

Despite this hostile atmosphere towards female students, Francisca, a strong student, eventually became ‘*profesora auxiliar*’ (a specific, more prestigious role assumed by some students in charge of teaching, and not just correcting exams, as ordinary *ayudantes* do) in the course given by the only female faculty member. Yet even performing this highly esteemed role among fellow students was challenging for Francisca: ‘I was treated differently. People expected much more from you, beyond my work’, she tells me. ‘I was constantly challenged by male students about my knowledge’, she further points out. Francisca thus gives voice to both the unequal intellectual respect given to women and the continual test of their merit in engineering. Ana, the engineer we encountered at the outset of this research and in Chapter

6, largely confirms Francisca's experience. As Ana rather bluntly but tellingly puts it: 'women are not expected to do well in maths, however good you are'.

Compared to their male counterparts, female interviewees who studied engineering, both at UCH and at PUC, experienced a considerably greater academic insecurity. This means that 'being good at maths', as Rodrigo conveyed it above, has a powerful gender manifestation. Female students from non-elite backgrounds are deprived of one of the few means that allow male students from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds to reduce their class marginality in male-dominated academic disciplines such as engineering. This occurs, I argue, not because of any difference in cultural capital *per se*, but because of the status of its holder. Recognising that engineering has been historically constituted as the quintessential male occupation entails that any particular attempt to leverage that knowledge ('being good at maths') in this profession *must* be understood as a gendered process. In other words, such knowledge is indissolubly linked to its source (Bourdieu, 1998, p.104 n40; see also Bourdieu, 1994). First-generation female students in engineering thus face compounded and durable disadvantages: not just the disadvantage rooted in their class backgrounds but also that tied to their gender.

(Prior) School Trajectory and Class Marginality at Elite Universities

A final source of variability in the way disadvantaged students adjust to UCH and PUC concerns their previous school trajectory.¹²⁵ As I have shown in Chapter 6, students educated at ordinary state or voucher schools typically arrived at university with a lack of academic preparation, exposure to a very limited social diversity, and with cultural norms very different from those governing the elite circles. Pedro and Catherine—the two students we met at the

¹²⁵ This issue has been previously raised by Anthony Jack (2014, 2019) in the US.

beginning of this chapter who were trained at state and voucher schools, respectively—struggled greatly to adapt themselves to the Faculties of Law at UCH and PUC. They reached higher education not only less prepared to perform well academically, but also intimidated or overwhelmed by the inner workings of the university machinery, and worried about how they would adjust socially to their new circumstances.

Both Pedro and Catherine found themselves struggling alone, not being able to perform well academically or to integrate into the social life at elite universities, with little or no support from their families, who do not know the ‘rules of the game’ (Lareau, 2015) of elite academic settings. Catherine not only failed her first oral exam. She was also heavily reprimanded by a stringent mother who, like Catherine herself, was unaware of the pressures her daughter was living through at PUC. Pedro’s difficulties with his ‘progressive’ friends who revealed his identity is equally expressive of the social challenges a student like him encounters at top universities. For him, getting support from family or friends from his state school was even more problematic because they were a long way away in the provincial town where he grew up. It is not by chance that students from state or voucher schools are the most likely group to abandon their undergraduate studies (Canales and de los Ríos, 2007, 2009; González *et al.*, 2005; Meneses *et al.*, 2010).

Notwithstanding all the disadvantages they confront, a small fraction of interviewees who had attended state or voucher schools did manage to adapt better than others to UCH and PUC. This occurred among those who demonstrated a strong academic performance. Daniel, the student of law at UCH we met earlier in this chapter, used his academic credibility to become a teaching assistant. Even if this did not guarantee him a full membership to his privileged peers’ social circles, it nevertheless smoothed his academic and social integration at the Faculty of Law. Others were able to develop supportive friendships, either with those

who came from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds or with better-off students who came from outside Santiago. Juan, a student of law at PUC we encountered in Chapter 5, is one of them. Juan had been educated at different state schools in the numerous provincial towns where he grew up, but found a consistent and enduring group of friends at PUC: ‘At [PUC] I was extremely lucky to find ten people like me in my generation. They are my closest friends now and were very important for me throughout university’, he tells me. But, after a pause, Juan promptly clarifies: ‘I do not think that happens all the time and in all generations at a place like [PUC].’

Table IX: Class marginality by type of schooling prior to entrance to higher education

	State or voucher schools	<i>Liceos emblemáticos</i>
Academic adjustment	Problematic	Smoother
Social adjustment	Problematic	Easier
Available networks at university	Few or inexistent	Wider and lasting: ‘travelling companions’

The arduous and problematic adjustment of students from state or voucher schools lies in salient contrast to those educated at *liceos emblemáticos* (see Table IX). Students from *liceos emblemáticos*, as I noted in Chapter 6, receive a solid academic preparation (cultural capital), are exposed to a much greater social diversity and networks (social capital), and are familiarised with cultural norms more closely related to both meritocratic mobility and elite values (symbolic capital). Thus, based on the relative high-quality academic preparation and a collective membership to elite state education, students from disadvantaged origins but

previously trained at *liceos emblemáticos* land at UCH and PUC with a wider set of resources to successfully navigate elite universities.

The case of students educated at Instituto Nacional, the leading institution among *liceos emblemáticos*, is particularly telling of this easier adjustment to top universities. Jorge, a former student at Instituto Nacional enrolled in law at PUC and whom we met in Chapter 5, succinctly conveys the set of tools Instituto Nacional provided to him:

‘[*Instituto Nacional*] instils into their students the goal of getting to the best universities and everything is structured to make that goal possible. It is a horse race ... We also have very good teachers and students with the same goal in mind. All that gives you confidence in yourself as a good student but also one who is part of this school ... a school with history, that everyone knows about. I think that matters not only for university, but later on in life, too. Like the rest of my classmates and friends, whether I like it or not, I will be an *institutano* for all my life.’

Jorge’s strong self-identification as ‘an institutano’ is indicative of how alumnae from Instituto Nacional still bring the mark of what Bourdieu (1989, p. 111) terms ‘*esprit de corps*’: a robust and lasting sense of identification each member feels towards this institution. But Jorge also highlights how Instituto Nacional is a ‘school with history, that everyone knows about’—a way to convey the longstanding tradition of educational excellence structured around a salient *republican* and *meritocratic* script which I underscored in Chapter 6.

Significantly, this wide recognition serves as a both *symbolic* and *social shelter* at top universities for the students trained at *liceos emblemáticos*. Rodrigo, whom we met earlier in this chapter, arrived at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH not only with the prestige tied to Instituto Nacional on his back. He also had access to study groups composed by other *institutanos* from the first day at university—as many of his former fellow students also gained admission to the same campus at UCH (‘around twenty other *institutanos*’, he tells me). These fellow *institutanos* remained significant travelling companions while navigating university, proving that ‘*esprit de corps*’ also means enduring social ties (Bourdieu, 1989, pp. 254-5) to navigate

higher education. Thus, Rodrigo, like many other interviewees educated at *liceos emblemáticos*, managed to reduce the class marginality—and the loneliness and bewilderment that comes with it—at elite universities.

The benefits associated with being educated at *liceos emblemáticos* were also enjoyed by female interviewees. Carmen a, whom we have followed throughout this research from Chapter 5, was educated at the respected Liceo 1 Javiera Carrera before landing at the Faculty of Medicine at UCH. Due to her solid academic training at Liceo 1, Carmen remained an outstanding student at UCH. However, despite being a strong student, she struggled to adjust socially to the Faculty of Medicine: ‘I felt it was not my space’, she tells me. Feeling ill at ease in a ‘university environment’ she considered ‘competitive’ and ‘individualistic’, Carmen chose to ‘self-marginalised’ herself from her peers. Mirroring the experience of María, in her second year at university, Carmen devoted her time and energies to organise a ‘preuniversitario popular’ and a ‘mobile library project’ for low-income people living in deprived urban areas. Carmen remarks she lived all those years ‘in a dissociation of environments’ between her life at university and that developed outside the campus. But, unlike María, Carmen undertook these projects along her former friends from Liceo 1—who remain to this day her ‘closest friends’. This was possible for her largely because of the strong and lasting ties she forged at her secondary school, helping her to navigate a better position during her first years at UCH. Nothing matching these resources was available for Pedro or Catherine.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined how interviewees adjust to UCH’s and PUC’s most selective and coveted academic programmes: engineering, medicine, and law. In these institutional

settings, I have shown how interviewees experience class marginality through *combined* and *cumulative* incidents of class stigmatisation and discrimination. Significantly, as I uncover, these incidents are boundary-marking, liminal experiences: they generate a gradual but steady sense of *dislocation* in terms of their worldviews and aspirations, as well as their own sense of belonging. But I also revealed how class marginality is experienced *varies* depending on the specific academic programme—law, medicine, and engineering—in which the long-range upwardly mobile are enrolled, their gender, and the different secondary schools they have previously attended.

These findings bear implications for the large body of research addressing these issues. Firstly, by pointing out that variation in class marginality is contingent of the type of cultural capital (embodied cultural capital vis-à-vis technical capital) dominant in each academic programme, these findings call for greater differentiation between embodied cultural capital and technical capital to better understand how disadvantaged students adjust and navigate elite universities. Secondly, by uncovering how women experience a double disadvantage at elite universities—crystallising in specific forms of gender discrimination or stigmatisation—, my findings also draw much greater attention to the gendered modulations of class marginality. Thirdly, as I showed how a specific type of state schools—*liceos emblemáticos*—function as scaffolding, buffer, and protection in the adjustment of their alumnae to elite universities, these findings are an invitation to study more systematically the role different secondary schools have for upward mobility. *Liceos emblemáticos* not only transmit valuable forms of cultural and social capital rewarded at top universities (Jack, 2014, 2019), but they do so by gluing them together through a potent cultural repertoire—anchored in distinctive *republican* and *meritocratic* narrative—highly relevant for their upward trajectories (more on this in Chapter 9 and 10).

Conceptually, throughout this chapter I have argued that a useful way forward to address the issues and variability of class marginality at elite universities can be done through the notion of ‘assaults on worth’ (Lamont *et al.*, 2016). Unlike the Bourdieusian concept of ‘symbolic violence’—being compelled to see one’s values and lifestyle through the lens of the dominant classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005[1992])—assaults on worth better grasps the wide range of class mistreatment the upwardly mobile experience in elite university settings: being misunderstood, overlooked, underestimated, or stereotyped. Addressing these incidents through this analytical prism, I argue, offers a more granular understanding of how class marginality among the upwardly mobile is not only associated to the relative lack of resources, but also with more subtle gender disparities and wider ‘recognition gaps’ (Lamont, 2018): a denied cultural membership and a devalued sense of self-worth closely linked to their class backgrounds (more on this in Chapter 8).

Chapter 8.

Juggling their Way through High-status Occupations:

Negotiating Class-based Identities in Medicine, Law, and Engineering.

Introduction

Andrea, a middle-aged doctor we briefly encountered in Chapter 7, receives me at a large health centre devoted to primary health care, located in a lower-middle class municipality in Santiago, where she works as its director. Wearing a traditional white coat and sitting at her spacious office, Andrea speaks to me in a lively, straightforward, and confident manner. During the first few moments of our dialogue, her attitude gives me the impression of being in presence of someone accustomed to exercise a role of authority in one of the most prestigious occupations in the nation. As our interview progresses, however, the conversation gradually adopts a more intimate and emotional tone, especially when we address her university years and subsequent transition to the labour market.

As we delve deeper in her narrative, Andrea, brought up neither by a distinctive loyalist nor legitimist stance towards upward mobility (see Chapter 2), makes it nonetheless clear to me that her choice of medical specialty and her ensuing professional orientation has been moulded by her class background and upward trajectory. Like the vast majority of interviewees, Andrea entered university aiming to translate her future professional degree into secure and steady employment—one capable of providing a source of stable income. This was key not just to support herself and pay the debts that she accumulated over time;

but also, and crucially, to provide financial assistance to her family of origin. It was not by chance that as soon as Andrea graduated from university, she gave part of her income to help her parents. ‘As the eldest daughter, I felt responsible for them’, she says to me, mirroring a widespread attitude among interviewees.

But alongside the need for stable employment to support her family, Andrea also admits that ‘issues of belonging’ were central in shaping her orientation to her work as a doctor. Having left her family of origin in her provincial town to come to study to Santiago at an early age *and* experiencing a durable cultural and social shock during her university years, Andrea joined a group of students from mixed class backgrounds at PUC—some privileged, others first-generation students, like herself—who ‘wanted to work in primary health care’. ‘This issue of belonging was an important issue for me’, she tells me. ‘I had this emotional wound since I left my home ... I liked many areas of medicine, but I needed to be part of a group of people with similar interests and backgrounds [to her own] ... a place to feel comfortable’, she further points out.

For Andrea, the choice of primary health care offered not only a group in which to find a refuge to her class dislocation. It also gave her a ‘niche’ to feel at greater ease in vocational terms and in trying to remain connected to her background through her work. Significantly, the quest of this ‘niche’ in primary health care alongside her similarly minded fellow students was against the prevailing professional orientation at the elite institution she was trained. Unlike most of her privileged peers, who opted for the most prestigious medical specialties, Andrea’s option for primary health care went against the current. She was well aware that ‘[primary health care] is a part of medicine that everyone despises, that nobody wanted’. Yet Andrea emphasises that ‘my choice of [primary health care] was a good niche for someone

with social mobility like me', not least because she could continue to be connected to people sharing her social origins.

The reasons invoked by Andrea—a sense of responsibility towards her family of origin, issues of belonging, and her efforts to remain connected to her background of origin through her work—foreground the important *elective* or *agentic* choices underpinning her way of approaching and navigating her high-status profession. A growing body of Bourdieu-inspired research identifies multiple class-based barriers that the upwardly mobile face when translating their academic credentials into access to competitive employment (Ashley *et al.*, 2015; Macmillan 2009; Macmillan *et al.*, 2014; Rivera 2012, 2015) or career progression (Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019) at elite jobs. While this research perceptively uncovers numerous factors detrimental to those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, an exclusive focus on occupational barriers or 'class ceilings' does not *fully* take into account how the upwardly mobile themselves are implicated in their professions through their own goals, values, and commitments. It is precisely to these specific orientations, practices, and dispositions the upwardly mobile may hold, alongside the class-based barriers they face, what Andrea's account draws greater attention to.

In this chapter, I address how the long-range upwardly mobile navigate high-status occupations such as medicine, law, and engineering in Chile. While Chapter 7 examined how interviewees adjusted to UCH and PUC, here I look more closely at their transition from elite universities to the labour market and how they implicate themselves in their professions. I show how the upwardly mobile face abundant class-based barriers in their careers but also reveal the ways they approach them with distinctive practices, dispositions, and orientations. While they certainly adjust to the 'rules of the game' (Lareau, 2015) structuring their high-status occupations, they also—drawing both on different cultural repertoires and the

responsibility to support their families of origin—accommodate the dominant rules according to their own goals, values, and commitments. These findings, I argue, are indicative of the *elective* or *agentive* elements structuring their upward trajectories and informing the ‘supply-side’ of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 194).

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I address the persistent force of a class ceiling within high-status occupations in Chile. Secondly, I show how interviewees position themselves regarding the broader institutional and cultural trends shaping their professional fields. Thirdly, I examine the specific tensions and dilemmas arising from their upward trajectories—a sense of responsibility to support their families of origin, the issues of belonging that they confront in their work settings, and their efforts to remain connected to their backgrounds of origin—and how they face them in their careers. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks.

A Persistent Class Ceiling

The lingering influence of class origins informed much of my conversation with Andrea about her professional career as a doctor. By the end of our interview, she tells me straightforwardly: ‘I have no chance to continue to ascend in this institution’. After a pause, she clarifies this is something she has not dared to share with others before, adding: ‘I do not have the profile. I do not belong to the *‘cofradía’* (brotherhood) of [elite private] schools of the people in charge’.¹²⁶ Like most interviewees, Andrea underlines the dominant role played

¹²⁶ Even though Andrea works as the director of a private health centre focused on the provision of primary health care, the organisation in which she works is part of a wider network of healthcare centres. It is to that larger institutional network, and the hierarchies underpinning them, that Andrea refers to when she speaks about her limited opportunities for career advancement.

by private schooling in shaping the occupational trajectories of those reaching positions of influence or power in these top professions.

In saying this, however, Andrea does not downplay her own professional success. She acknowledges it and gives a significant amount of credit to her mentor and the group of colleagues working with her in primary health care. But although Andrea has managed to ascend the professional ladder in her work, she has also become more aware of the stubborn barriers at play: the power enjoyed by those educated at exclusive private schools, the larger cultural barriers for outsiders, the pay gaps that are detrimental to women. Andrea thus gives voice to the persistence forms of social closure shaping her work, which have left her hesitant about her role there: ‘many times I wonder what I am doing here’, she remarks.

These class-based barriers are not exclusive to medicine. They are also present in a profession like law. Amparo, a lawyer from PUC in her late 30s, offers a powerful illustration of the type of obstacles still hampering the access to the labour market for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Animated by an outstanding academic performance at PUC, where she won the key awards of her cohort, Amparo applied to the most renowned private legal firms in Santiago. But after almost three years of searching for a job matching her academic achievements, she got few tangible rewards: Amparo applied to more than thirty job vacancies; she was successful in none of them.

Most of the time, Amparo tells me, her applications were ‘dismissed without providing any explanation’. When she managed to get job interviews, she felt ‘insecure’ and ‘adrift’. The topics at hand revolved not just around her previous academic performance and university training, where she felt confident. But she also faced repeated questions about ‘extra-

curricular activities', 'career prospects'¹²⁷, her 'secondary school', and even her residence 'address'.¹²⁸ Time and again, Amparo confronted the 'non-educational signifiers' through which recruiters at elite firms 'distinguish suitable from non-suitable candidates' (Tholen *et al.*, 2013, p. 144): 'I felt I was being filtered not by my credentials, not from what I did, but by something else, beyond my control', Amparo explains. In particular, the questions concerning her 'secondary school' or residence 'address' were telling of an explicit search of those candidates sharing social and cultural traits rooted in an upper-class background. Still affected by the sore memory of these events, Amparo bitterly remarks: 'it was emotionally horrendous'.

The salience of these class barriers is discernible in engineering as well. Diego, a structural engineer trained at PUC we met in Chapter 5, acknowledges the 'social barriers' still shaping the constructing business in the private sector, where he has worked for more than a decade. Like Andrea and Amparo, Diego recognises that private schooling is often 'an unfair element' in the labour market. But, relatedly, he adds that the lack of proficiency in English is another barrier many confront as a 'notorious disadvantage': 'English has been an issue for me, a job necessity'. Echoing the experience of most interviewees, he has devoted a considerable amount of time and money to improve his command of English. Revealingly, he says: 'with an improved English I can grow professionally, and they [he is referring to recruiters in the private sector] cannot totally exclude me'.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Lauren Rivera (2012, 2015) convincingly shows that extracurriculars and careers prospects play an important part in the recruitment processes in elite firms in the US. These activities are part of the cultural similarities—or 'cultural matching'—that recruiters carefully assess in job candidates, but very often work in detriment of those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

¹²⁸ Regarding her address, Amparo confesses that this was an 'issue', leading her to change that from her CV, following the recommendation of a close friend.

¹²⁹ Cofré (2018) confirms that the command of English has consolidated as sorting mechanism in the labour market for engineers.

More generally, Diego tells me he thinks that in engineering ‘there is meritocracy in the middle management positions in the private sector, or for those engineers working in the state’. Yet a different story emerges when we talked about those who occupy leading positions in the industry. Here Diego underlines that ‘upper management’ and ‘companies’ boards’ are ‘still controlled by people from PUC with *apellidos vinosos* (vineyard-sounding family names)’. Diego thus alludes to the Castilian-Basque aristocracy rooted in the 18th century—those holding surnames such as *Larraín*, *Echeñique*, *Errázuriz* (see Chapter 3)—whom, according to him, are still in command of key posts in big private companies. Diego, himself a strong believer in self-reliance and the individual rewards for merit—the marks of a *legitimist* stance towards upward mobility¹³⁰—, concedes nonetheless that these are ‘closed groups associated with family-type companies’, in which ‘social background’ and ‘contacts’ ‘continue to have weight, at times more than abilities’. His remarks thus aptly reflect the stark concentration of economic power among small groups of elites (Solimano 2012, Ch. 7; see also Ossandón, 2013; Schneider, 2009, 2013; Salvaj, 2013) .

Taken together, Andrea’s, Amparo’s, and Diego’s work experiences are indicative of the ‘class ceiling’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019) shaping high-status occupations in contemporary Chile. As I noted in Chapter 3, a staggering 84 percent of those practicing medicine, law, or engineering, hold a family name related to the Castilian-Basque aristocracy or non-Spanish European family names (mostly German, Italian, and English) (UNDP, 2017, p. 354). Much of this striking concentration, as Andrea and Amparo suggest, is rooted in exclusive private schooling—a feature amply contributing to reinforce the privileges of

¹³⁰ In many respects, Diego also embodies the neoliberal framework for valuing education, emphasising individual-based self-reliance and the search of socio-economic success, which I outlined in Chapter 5.

the already privileged (Núñez and Pérez, 2007; Zimmerman, 2019a).¹³¹ These class barriers in the access to elite professions also go hand in hand with gender barriers. The probability of men being represented in these professions is 3.6 times higher than for women (UNDP, 2017, p. 95), and participation of the latter in positions of power remains marginal (Comunidad Mujer, 2016; UNDP, 2010, 2020).

But Andrea's, Amparo's, and Diego's work experiences also highlight the role specific elite professional organisations play in hampering access and/or career progression for the upwardly mobile. Amparo's daunting and unsuccessful job search did not occur in any type of job in the legal profession but within a narrower group of elite law firms in Santiago. Andrea's and Diego's critical awareness of the lingering barriers to career progression in their workplaces points to the more granular hierarchies shaping the upper echelons of specific organisations within their elite professions. Their narratives thus suggest the need to focus much more on the role performed by specific elite professional organisations—rather than just discrete occupational groups—in the exclusion of outsiders (Ashley and Empson, 2016). Yet the barriers tied to the 'class ceiling', although undoubtedly relevant in fashioning the occupational trajectories of those coming from non-privileged backgrounds, do not fully account for how the career choices of the long-range upwardly mobile themselves are implicated in the exercise of their professions. In what follows, I address this 'supply-side' (i.e., the resources *and* agency of the upwardly mobile), and not just the 'demand-side' (i.e., the specificities of each occupational field), of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 194).

¹³¹ In Chile, as elsewhere, attendance to exclusive private schools facilitates access to top tertiary education, and the combination of elite secondary schooling and elite university training facilitates access to elite jobs (cf. Zimmerman, 2019a).

Against the Current?

Echoing the general trend in Chile towards privatisation over the past decades, high-status occupations have transitioned from public service to the private sector (see Chapter 3). Against both this backdrop and the persistent class barriers shaping their professions, it is significant to underline how interviewees' make specific career choices within their respective professional (sub)fields. Indeed, a considerable proportion of them—as I now go on to address—position themselves against or resisting the prevailing trends in their elite professions.

The case of medicine serves to illustrate the point at hand. Countering its traditional identity associated with public service, the medical profession has seen a substantial expansion in the private sector (Homedes and Ugalde, 2002; Unger *et al.*, 2008) and the consolidation of a 'pro-specialist culture' (Breinbauer *et al.*, 2009) in recent decades. Yet among interviewees there are noticeable signs of resistance to these tendencies. Significantly, most interviewees have combined public employment with part-time jobs in the private sector¹³²; others have devoted their entire professional careers to the public sector or, like Andrea, worked in private health services but attending low-income patients.¹³³

¹³² Only 4 out of 20 medical interviewees have held or currently hold a part-time job in clinics located in the most wealthiest urban areas. See also footnote 133.

¹³³ This distinction is noteworthy. Since the reforms of the 1980s, as I noted in Chapter 3, the Chilean health system is characterised by a dual functioning: a *public* and *private* provision of health services. Although private health service providers have primarily served higher income populations, some of them have also expanded to cover less affluent patients. It is to this latter—but not the former—group that Andrea has devoted her professional career, and for her and other interviewees that makes an important difference. Compared to an overall average remuneration of doctors estimated at around Ch\$2-3 million (US\$ 4.000) on a monthly basis (El Mercurio, 2016), those working in the private sector and holding a medical specialty can reach an approximate figure of Ch\$7-8 million (US\$ 10.000) (UNDP, 2017, p. 370). Moreover, *senior* doctors, working in private practice and /or associated with clinics located in high-income urban areas, can earn several times the average remuneration in the private sector (Ibid).

Importantly, too, in terms of choice of specialty, none of my interviewees has chosen the most prestigious and/or lucrative medical specialties, such as dermatology, ophthalmology, or otorhinolaryngology, which are the most competitive to access upon graduation. Instead, the bulk of them (15) had opted for less renowned specialties such as internal medicine, surgery, psychiatry, paediatrics, or anaesthesia. A considerably smaller but still important group—composed only by women (3)—has preferred specialties placed at the bottom of the scale of prestige and remuneration, such as primary health care (Castro, 2005; Montero *et al.*, 2010). A final group, confined to 2 women belonging to the older generation in my sample, had not specialised at all.¹³⁴

Much like medicine, law has been marked by the transition from an orientation primarily devoted to public affairs towards a specialised and stratified professional practice in the private sector (Delamaza, 2002). Currently, access to competitive employment depends largely on a combination of a number of key filters: the prestige of the alma mater of graduates, post-graduate education, and command of English (Delamaza 2002, p. 212; Idealis, 2017). But as Amparo's troubled access to job opportunities suggests, these formal requirements often go hand in hand with informal, even more exclusive filters—such as type of secondary school attendance, residence, or gender¹³⁵—blocking access to outsiders.

¹³⁴ In the early stages of their professional careers, most doctors work under state employment (Breinbauer *et al.*, 2009). The vast majority of graduates in medicine from UCH and PUC are employed by the state, since both profiles seek to specialise, and most specialty positions are monopolised by the Ministry of Health. When they opt to specialise, which involves three years of additional training, doctors from disadvantaged background tend to do it under state sponsorship, which means they need to work for the state for twice as long as they were funded. There are no studies about what they do once they no longer need to work for the state. Due to the increasing privatisation of medicine as a profession, it is reasonable to assume that some would migrate to the private sector. However, my findings suggest there is no clear trend in that direction.

¹³⁵ Compared to medicine, law has a stronger gender pay gap (Bravo *et al.*, 2008; Zimmerman, 2019b).

Revealingly, under such conditions, only 3 out of the 20 lawyer interviewees currently hold a job at elite private law firms. The majority of them are employed in the public sector, though many have previously held a temporary job in the private sector, including elite firms. Thus, echoing what occurs in medicine, the lawyers in my sample show a choice of public employment countering the prevailing trend towards privatisation in their profession.

Like medicine and law, engineering, too, has shifted its professional identity from public service to the private sector. This re-orientation has implied a renewal of those in charge of the economy: from the senior executives trained at the Faculty of Engineering at UCH through the 20th century to the commercial engineers¹³⁶ with MBAs educated at PUC—the alma mater of the Chicago Boys—or with postgraduate degrees from top universities in the US (Nazer, 2012) gaining increasing prominence since the 1980s onwards. In engineering, like law, access to competitive employment largely depends on which university the candidate graduated from, the ‘cultural match’ between the candidate and the firm, and their knowledge of English (Cofré, 2018).

Significantly, unlike medicine or law, engineer interviewees, both trained at UCH and PUC, are mostly employed in the private sector. Diego, the engineer from PUC we encountered earlier in this chapter, represents the rule, not the exception: only 6 of my 20 interviewees work in public employment. Still, engineering is characterised by a class pay gap—particularly among commercial engineers (Núñez and Gutiérrez, 2004)¹³⁷—and by gender disparities

¹³⁶ Commercial engineering, as I noted in Chapter 3 and 4, is an academic programme highly idiosyncratic to Chile. Its equivalence elsewhere would be a business studies degree, but one also including the possibility of developing a major in economics and not just in management.

¹³⁷ Núñez and Gutiérrez (2004) indicate that upper-class commercial engineers earn approximately 50 percent more than those from disadvantaged backgrounds (though see Bravo *et al.*, 2008). More recent research, including lawyers and engineers graduated from UCH and PUC in leading corporate positions, confirms this class pay gap. It concludes that individuals from non-elite backgrounds tend to receive ‘income levels near the top of distribution, but not at the top’ (Zimmerman, 2019a, p. 33).

detrimental to women, both in terms of earnings and positions of authority (Cofré, 2018). And the closer we get to positions of leadership, as Diego suggested, the greater the class and gender gaps, especially in the private sector (Zimmerman, 2019a, 2019b): just 3 interviewees occupy senior positions in their jobs, and only one of them is a women.

How to make sense of these findings? Recent research indicates the existence of numerous ‘drivers’—the economic security transmitted by family-based resources; sponsored mobility premised on class-cultural homophily; class-based behaviour misrecognised yet rewarded as ‘talent’—favouring the privileged and preventing the upwardly mobile from reaching top positions in high-status occupations (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Interviewees, as I show below, confirm that these drivers are at play in their professions. Yet these drivers, however relevant, do not fully account for how the upwardly mobile deal with the tensions and dilemmas arising from their trajectories and involving their professions. While they certainly adapt to the ‘rules of the game’ (Lareau, 2015) structuring their high-status occupations, they also—drawing both on different cultural repertoires and the responsibility to support their families of origin—accommodate the dominant rules according to their own goals, values, and commitments. These goals, values, and commitments, as I now go on to address, are indicative of the *elective* or *agentive* choices through which the long-range upwardly mobile both remain attached to their backgrounds of origin and negotiate their class-based identities in high-status occupations.

The dilemmas of the Upwardly Mobile in High-status Occupations

Supporting families of origin versus enhancing professional careers

Rodrigo, a middle-aged engineer trained at UCH we encountered in Chapter 7, welcomes me at one of CODELCO's—the Chilean state-owned copper company, the biggest in the world—branches dedicated to technological innovation, where he works part-time as a consultant. Situated in one of Santiago's largest business district, the building in which we meet stands out with its modern glass style. From the outset of our interview, Rodrigo tells me about his upbringing in an unsettled family marked by deep destitution and distress. His father worked for a time as a car mechanic but had strong mental health issues which increasingly deteriorated his ability to work. His mother, at first employed as a secretary, soon became a full-time housewife to support her four children—two of whom had serious illnesses. Under these circumstances, Rodrigo learnt to be self-reliant from a very early age and worked with his father to contribute to the thin, volatile family income. This economic support to his family, Rodrigo remarks, continued throughout his university years and subsequent transition to the labour market, leaving—as I show below—a lasting imprint on his occupational trajectory.

Educated at the still prominent Instituto Nacional, Rodrigo did not have much trouble in adjusting academically to the new challenges he faced at university (see Chapter 7). His difficulties remained more salient in terms of finding a fragile balance between the unrelenting need to support his family and his academic responsibilities. During his first four years at university, Rodrigo managed to work alongside his father without substantially affecting his academic performance. But as his father's health continued to deteriorate, his commitment to remain a strong student was impaired: 'I struggled a lot to remain focused

on my studies', he tells me. 'But it was not really possible', he further points out, referring to the increasing demands to support his family. Despite still being a good student, Rodrigo did not even try to become a teaching assistant. Unlike most of his talented peers, he could not take part in other academic activities such as being a teaching or research assistant, both of which are considered important activities in themselves and can pave the way from university to the labour market. 'I did not have time for any of that', he regretfully recalls.

Rodrigo's misgivings are well founded. Top universities are not only sites where cultural horizons are widened and social ties are formed; they are also institutional settings in which occupational aspirations and opportunities are shaped (Binder *et al.*, 2016; Stevens *et al.*, 2008; Walpole, 2003). At both UCH and PUC, the transition into the labour market begins well before the academic programmes have formally ended. Being a teaching assistant or working in internships can provide key stepping-stones for competitive employment or post-graduate opportunities. However, access to these coveted activities is not distributed on equal terms for privileged and disadvantaged students. As I have shown in Chapter 7, most underprivileged students face elite universities unprepared for academic work and little know-how on how to successfully navigate higher education. These disadvantages often translate into the impossibility of being seen by faculty or by the gatekeepers in private or public firms.

Even for someone educated at a prestigious *liceo emblemático*, Rodrigo's case illustrates well the persistence of the responsibilities many felt towards their families of origin even before completing their undergraduate studies. By the time he was finishing his university studies, Rodrigo's father was unable to work anymore. As a result, Rodrigo had to assume full responsibility as bread-winner for this family. This situation led not just to a pronounced

decline in his academic performance; it also foreclosed the possibility of conducting doctoral studies abroad:

‘When I was finishing my degree, there was a chance to embark on doctoral studies in Canada. A friend of mine recommended this to me and also to apply for a scholarship ... I always remember that it was a thousand Canadian dollars [*strong emphasis in his voice*]. But at that time, I had to take care of my family financially, I had to take care of everything financially. I made the calculations and it was not enough. I said to myself: I am going to go there. It is going to be enough for me to live on. But I am not going to be at peace with myself knowing that my family may not have enough to eat. So, I took the decision to stay’.

More than twenty years after this episode, Rodrigo is still haunted by it: ‘I suffered because I felt I could not exploit my full potential’. And this suffering has accompanied him over time: ‘The thing that bothers me to this day is those light judgments that people make, that they have made about me, and that I also see that they make of others’, he says. ‘I mean those judgements which reveal they have no understanding of the person in their context’, Rodrigo further explains, with the old pain still choking his voice.

Rodrigo’s experience amply resonates with the rest of interviewees. Francisca, another engineer trained at UCH we met in Chapter 7, was, like Rodrigo, a very strong student. After completing her undergraduate studies and gaining some research experience, Francisca was offered the chance to undertake doctoral studies in France. ‘This filled me with pride’, Francisca tells me. Yet after carefully pondering all the implications, she declined this promising option for enhancing her professional career.

‘At the time, I was emotionally exhausted by my [undergraduate] studies. I did not want to continue the race which I have been doing so far. And learn French and adjust to a new society, I just could not do it [*emphasis in his voice*] ... I needed to find a job, pay my debts, and help my parents.’

Francisca thus gives voice to the multiple forces shaping her occupational choices and putting her at a disadvantage relative to her privileged peers: the draining emotional labour involved in completing undergraduate studies; the longing for secure employment and financial stability; the reluctance to face the additional barriers tied to post-graduate education (c.f., Friedman and Laurison, 2019, pp. 171-3, 175-9). Significantly, Francisca concludes by highlighting the pressing demand to ‘help’ her ‘parents’. For both Francisca and Rodrigo, this ‘help’ to their families of origin was felt as a powerful sense of responsibility and involves a multifaceted assistance—including direct financial transfers, but also a wider support in education, health, pensions. Importantly, too, the support they provide to their families of origin has nothing but increased since they graduated from university.

A strong feeling of responsibility experienced as a compelling moral duty, is highly prevalent among interviewees (more on this in Chapter 9).¹³⁸ This disposition lies in stark contrast to the privileged: while the latter receive considerable financial support from their affluent families (Friedman and Laurison, 2019), the former provide ongoing economic assistance to their very often deprived families of origin. Importantly, as Rodrigo’s and Francisca’s accounts make it abundantly clear, this continuing support is highly consequential for the way the upwardly mobile can face their professional development. Indeed, the persistent need to support their families, if not entirely impairing the development of their professional careers, puts them at a strong disadvantage relative to their privileged peers.

Issues of belonging

Rosa, a lawyer trained at PUC whom we fleetingly encountered in Chapter 7, cordially greets me as I enter the ‘boutique’ legal firm where she works. Located in one of Santiago’s

¹³⁸ As noted in Chapter 2, Jules Naudet identified a similar disposition among the upwardly mobile Dalits in India (Naudet, 2008, 2018[2012], Ch. 3).

wealthiest councils, surrounded by art galleries and other venues of conspicuous consumption, this law firm is primarily devoted to corporate law affairs associated with ‘high-income clients’. It is mid-February, and the office is almost empty, as most professionals are on summer holidays, except for Rosa and the cleaning personnel. Before starting our interview, Rosa walks me through a large modern-style office, criss-crossed by corridors adorned by paintings and sculptures signed by renowned artists. ‘It is an environment trying to convey the formality of our business but without being too serious to our clients’, she tells me. As we sit in the main meeting room, Rosa remarks that even the chairs are made by ‘especial designers.’ Here Rosa has developed all her professional career for nearly a decade. In this exclusive work environment, however, she has ‘never felt comfortable in’.

A recipient of several prizes for her excellent academic performance at PUC, Rosa got a job interview at this prestigious legal firm before finishing her professional degree. Unlike Amparo, she managed to successfully display her disadvantaged origins as a meritocratic pointer backed by her strong academic credentials.¹³⁹ Rosa was offered a very junior position. Over the course of the years, Rosa felt appreciated by her male boss, who advocated on her behalf and gave her valuable work. But perhaps more important was the empathetic understanding and guidance she has from the only other colleague with a similar social background. This female colleague, acting as a mentor, was ‘key’ to keeping Rosa afloat in an unfamiliar work environment, providing both crucial assistance for work decisions and emotional sustenance to overcome ‘insecurities’ or ‘stressful situations’. Acknowledging a ‘complicity’ rooted in a shared upward trajectory and similar concerns about fitting in, Rosa tells me: ‘she has been a key companion in my work’. For Rosa, both her boss and fellow co-

¹³⁹ Notwithstanding all the class-based barriers highlighted above, this confirms that some working-class origins can be occasionally valued as an asset—and not just a barrier—in accessing competitive employment (e.g., Naudet, 2014; Streib, 2016; Stuber, 2005).

worker have acted as ‘cultural guides’ (Lareau, 2015; more on this in Chapter 2), helping her to navigate institutions for those unfamiliar with their inner workings.

Yet all this mentorship has never made Rosa feel at ease at work, despite her continuous efforts to adjust to her job. Rosa, raised in a family holding a legitimist stance towards upward mobility and being herself a staunch believer in the value of meritocracy, speaks of an ongoing sense of ‘discomfort’ and ‘awkwardness’ in relation to the topics of conversation held by colleagues on a daily basis: expensive holidays abroad, skiing with their children during the winter break, or going to fashionable restaurants. All these social practices among Rosa’s wealthy co-workers seem to faithfully represent different forms of ‘distinction’ in Bourdieu’s (1984[1979]) sense of the word: a smartness made possible by what is exclusive. ‘I remain silent’, Rosa tells me. ‘I cannot relate to that, I just cannot’, she emphatically remarks.

Rosa’s persistent lack of fit at her work has not only been shaped by this uneasiness and sense of lack of entitlement (Côté *et al.*, 2020) regarding exclusive social practices. It has also been fashioned by concrete incidents drawing a boundary between herself and the rest of her colleagues. One of these incidents was related to a pay rise. As time went on, Rosa became aware that her salary was lower than her—especially male—colleagues with similar credentials and seniority. But at first Rosa felt reluctant to ask for a pay increase, even if she considered that her lower salary was a ‘discrimination’. The disadvantageous pay gaps Rosa experienced echoes wider gender disparities prevalent in Chile. In recent decades, research has established that women with more years of education and work experience suffer greater pay gaps compared to their male peers (UNDP 2010, 2020); and this gap increases to 36 percent among the top income earners and corporate leadership positions (Zimmerman, 2019b). Only after two years with the same salary, Rosa found the confidence to ask her boss for an increase—one levelling the efforts made to the rewards she thought she deserved.

However, Rosa's male boss refused her pay rise categorically. But in doing so, he also added: 'It is not my fault that you spend your money on your parents, while your colleagues do it on their wardrobes'. With her voice cracking from struggling to keep her tears back, Rosa acknowledges that this incident 'hurt me a lot', largely because it involved just the person whom she had originally trusted. But more importantly, her boss' cavalier dismissal was an insidious reminder of Rosa's class difference with respect to the rest of her privileged colleagues: while Rosa needs the money to support her parents, her (female) co-workers spend it 'in their wardrobes'. For Rosa, derogatory comments like these represent a potent combination of class discrimination and stigmatisation, which she unequivocally qualifies as both 'classist' and 'sexist'. As such, they act as boundary-marking, liminal experiences, deepening the class dislocation interviewees face with their ties of destination. Incidents of this type, especially experiences of class stigmatisation, are common among interviewees, though they vary by high-status occupations and gender (see Table X). They also tend to be more strongly experienced in work settings, such as Rosa's, where the established elites prevail.

These type of experiences of class stigmatisation, as I underscored in Chapter 7, can be analysed through the concept of 'assaults on worth'—incidents in which interviewees' sense of self and identity are challenged by being stereotyped, underestimated, or misunderstood (Lamont *et al.*, 2016, p. 6, 9, 18). In practice, they instigate a denied cultural membership and a devalued sense of self-worth closely linked to their class backgrounds, as they reinforce the lack of cultural and social fit that Rosa felt at her elite job. Wounded and bewildered, Rosa accepted her boss's refusal and kept going, chiefly because she did indeed need the money to support her ageing parents.

Table X: Type and prevalence of class mistreatment in work settings by high-status occupation

	Class discrimination*	Class stigmatisation**
Medicine (N=20)	20 %	55 %
Law (N=20)	35 %	75 %
Engineering (N=20)	15 %	45 %

Note: percentages calculated on the basis of the type of class mistreatment reported by each interviewee. *Class *discrimination* includes overt or blatant expressions of class mistreatment and which are primarily concerned with ways of preventing or depriving access to opportunities and/or resources due to different class origins. **Class *stigmatisation* includes a wider range of phenomena beyond opportunities and resources, such as being misunderstood, over-looked, or stereotyped (analytical distinction taken from Lamont *et al.*, 2016, p. 18).

Rosa's persistent lack of social and cultural fit at elite jobs is shared by other interviewees. Pedro, a lawyer trained at UCH whom we also encountered in Chapter 7, managed to gain access to a highly competitive position in the private sector. As Pedro readily admits, this was largely possible by the priceless help offered by a well-positioned sponsor. Yet, during the five years Pedro remained in this job, he felt 'constantly *desclasado* (declassified)', despite making constant efforts to adapt to his work environment and receiving the support of his mentor. Unlike Rosa, Pedro did not experience any form of direct discrimination against him at work, but he does recall the 'contemptuous treatment' of his wealthy colleagues towards the staff or to people not belonging to their own social circles, normally refer to as '*la gallada*' (the ordinary people). In this work setting, Pedro decided to refrain from involving himself in the social life outside of work and to focus instead on being recognised as a competent worker—as he needed the job not only to pay his debt for his university studies, but also to support himself and his family back in his natal provincial town. As soon as Pedro

was able to reach some work experience and financial stability, he looked for employment in the public sector.

Table XI: Type and prevalence of gender mistreatment in work settings

	Class discrimination*	Class stigmatisation**
Men (N=30)	6,7 %	46,7 %
Women (N=30)	23,3 %	73,3 %

Note: percentages calculated on the basis of the type of class mistreatment reported by each interviewee. *Class *discrimination* includes overt or blatant expressions of class mistreatment and which are primarily concerned with ways of preventing or depriving access to opportunities and/or resources due to different class origins. **Class *stigmatisation* includes a wider range of phenomena beyond opportunities and resources, such as being misunderstood, over-looked, or stereotyped (analytical distinction taken from Lamont *et al.*, 2016, p. 18)

Pedro's professional trajectory—from the private legal firms to employment in the public sector—is followed by many other lawyer interviewees. Pablo, another lawyer from UCH, shares this same employment trajectory. Tellingly, when I inquired about the motives behind his choice for public employment, Pablo replied:

‘In the private sector you are under constant pressure working for *los socios del estudio* (the owners of the law firm). In my experience all of them are *cnicos* (posh people). There is not much room for people like me, even though I worked for them for a while. And you can always loose the job ... I think in the public sector it is easier to develop a more stable professional career ... But also one that serves a wider purpose. In my work, for instance, I basically deal with problems similar to my own family, solving concrete problems that normal people have in their daily lives. And a good lawyer can make a difference to solve those problems ... So, it just makes more sense to me to be here [Pablo's current work] than in the private sector, even though there they really make money.’¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ In 2015, the average gross salary of 20 percent of the highest paid prosecutors and legal managers is around Ch\$ 20 million (US \$25.000) on a monthly basis (UNDP, 2017, p. 370)

Pablo thus brings together meaningful reasons for his preference for public employment after years working in the private sector. Firstly, he draws a clear line between himself and the owners of the firm—whom he describes as posh people earning large salaries. Secondly, in contrast to the instability he perceives prevails in the private sector, developing a career in the public sector provides Pablo with greater prospects of occupational stability. Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, public employment allows Pablo to serve ‘a wider purpose’, supporting ‘normal people’—like his own family—to solve pressing legal issues.

Given their economic insecurity, being less supported, and the anxieties related to not fitting in, this ‘sorting’ can be seen as form of ‘self-elimination’ from pushing their careers forward among the upwardly mobile (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 212). But it can also be considered, as I now go on to do, as a form in which the upwardly mobile reaffirm their own sense of identity in professional settings and make efforts to reconnect with their backgrounds of origin while navigating high-status occupations.

Efforts to (re)connect with their backgrounds of origin

Efforts made to reconnect with their backgrounds of origin through the work they do was a common feature across interviewees. Fernando, an economist we briefly met in Chapter 6, was one of them. Son of a syndicalist factory worker with sympathies for the Socialist Party and a domestic servant turned into a housewife, Fernando’s upbringing in the 1970s and 1980s was influenced by the remnants of the enlightened working-class culture (see Chapter 5). Now a middle-aged man with a successful career in both academia and in public policy, he receives me enthusiastically in his rather large office to talk about his life and upward mobility.

Although Fernando acknowledges a ‘growing distance’ separating himself with his background of origin, he nevertheless affirms that his social background continues to shape his worldviews and the topics he studies as an academic—education, labour markets, and inequality. In particular, in contrast to other colleagues coming from privileged backgrounds, Fernando emphasises how his professional orientation as an economist is still tied to his origins and upward trajectory. Referring to the government commission in which he has been involved as an expert along with other well-known economists, Fernando says:

‘We were in this group [*he refers to the government commission*] and there were tense moments with [*name of well-known economist from an upper class background*], with [*name of another well-known economist, also from an upper class background*] ... Given the trajectory I have, given my social history, it is very difficult *que me pasen gato por liebre* (literally that others give you a cat for a hare, meaning not being caught out with tricks) to me in the topics I master. Because I master them from my DNA! When I speak about meritocracy, or poverty, or inequality, I understand it very well [*he laughs*], because it is as what I have lived [*he emphasises*]. You see? It is because I go back to my neighbourhood on weekends [*he refers to the neighbourhood of his childhood*], and I see the guy with whom I played football when we were children, huh? and, and now he has a difficult time, you realise [*he is referring to himself*], he has a very different life from my own, very different [*he emphasises*]. So, I see that, week after week. So, of course, when it is my turn to defend the topics I study, I do not do it only from the unbiased estimate of a panel equation. I also do it from what I had to live through, from what I have seen [*he emphasises*].’

Fernando’s work, both as an academic and policymaker, is thus still deeply embedded in his class background—by his family of origin, his old neighbourhood, and the people who still live there. This crystallises into a technical expertise which is not detached from his own lived-experiences. Importantly, this orientation serves Fernando to draw a clear boundary between himself and his privileged colleagues—those who see economics as guided by supposedly irrefutable, value-neutral, scientific laws (cf. Thumala, 2013)—but who cannot play tricks with him. But equally significant, by bringing his class background and trajectory to the centre of what he does in his profession, Fernando projects an image of himself as someone making efforts to remain connected to his origins. Even if he now lives a very different life due to his long-range upward trajectory, Fernando constantly endeavours to give a place to those left behind in what he does as an economist.

Making efforts to remain connected to people sharing their class backgrounds through their professions was not confined to lawyers like Pablo or economist like Fernando. It is also salient among doctors. Carlos's work experience and trajectory, a doctor whom we met in Chapter 5, is telling in this regard. After graduating from medical school in the late 1980s, Carlos—like Andrea—began his professional career working in primary health care. In the early 1990s, he moved to work in local government, before being the head of the health service in Santiago—a job he performed for almost a decade. Carlos, embedded since his childhood both in the enlightened working-class culture and the broad public tradition tied to *liceos*, now works combining teaching in a state university with practising some clinical medicine. Throughout this professional career, Carlos insistently underlines his choice for 'public health'. He links this option with 'his greatest satisfactions' and distinguishes it from the high symbolic recognition enjoyed by the medical profession—to which he refers to by the term of '*diostor*' (playfully bringing the words 'god' and 'doctor' together in Spanish¹⁴¹): 'My greatest satisfactions in my work have been working as a clinical doctor or in health management, and seeing the impact my work has had on people'. And he adds: 'it is not by chance that I have been working in the public sector'. Carlos has never complemented his income by working part-time in the private sector: 'I have worked with people like me, with my background, and that has not change over time.'

A similar work orientation was also present among other doctors. Javier is one of them. Although unlike Carlos, Javier does not come from a left-leaning political background, he has similarly devoted most of his working life to the public service. Significantly, during our conversation, Javier coins the notion of '*salario íntimo*' (intimate salary). That utterance brings together two opposing logics in the very concrete effort to provide a personal meaning to

¹⁴¹ Here Carlos also takes an explicit distance from the 'professional gratifications' tied to 'official positions', which, as he suggests, can always be suspected of condescension.

his work and the rewards he obtains from it: while the word ‘salary’ conveys how an amount of work is exchanged by a certain wage, the ‘intimate’ attached to it sits at odds with the contractual, instrumental logic of a pecuniary remuneration. Through his work, Javier feels he provides a ‘crucial assistance’ to people ‘in need’. Importantly, too, in the public hospitals Javier has worked most of his life, those people ‘in need’ share his humble social background. To be sure, Javier does not diminish the importance of his monetary ‘salary’: ‘this gives me my livelihood’, he admits. But Javier makes it clear that what matters most to him is its ‘intimate’ facet: ‘patients’ affection and appreciation’, as he emotionally acknowledges.

A large proportion of interviewees thus make constant efforts to remain connected to their backgrounds of origin or with people sharing a similar class background through the work they do. The most common way this occurs, as I noted in a previous section in this chapter, is through the ongoing support they provide to their families of origin (more on this in Chapter 9). But for many, particularly those holding a loyalist stance towards mobility or are embedded in the enlightened working-class culture, their careers options also go consciously against the privatisation trends shaping their professions. All this, in addition to interviewees’ insistence on drawing a boundary between themselves and their colleagues from privileged backgrounds in their professions, can thus be understood as way to highlight how their distinctive class-based identities—alongside the barriers they persistently face—are implicated in their occupational choices.¹⁴² Even in a highly ‘neoliberalised’ society (see Chapter 3, 5, 6 and 9), for most this disposition can be seen as a form of ‘paying back’ (Naudet, 2008, 2018[2012]) to their families of origin or others sharing their class background, and endowed with a high dose of personal investment in the specific work interviewees commit to do.

¹⁴² These findings are aligned with those reported by sociologist Michael Hartmann for the German case. In his studies of the ‘core elite’ in that nation, Hartmann finds that those hailing from privileged backgrounds in elite occupations share strikingly similar views on issues such as ‘social justice, taxes and public spending’, while the upwardly mobile in those same positions display very different views on the same topics—and indeed much closer to those held by the wider population (see Palme, 2020).

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined how the long-range upwardly mobile experience their transition from university to the labour market and navigate high-status occupations in contemporary Chile. My findings indicate that interviewees face persistent class-based barriers in terms of access to competitive employment or career progression. They also show that the growing sense of *class dislocation* initiated at university is often intensified in the work setting—especially in those work settings where the established elites prevail—through repeated incidents of class and gender stigmatisation. Yet, however relevant these barriers and incidents of class and gender stigmatisation are, they do not fully account for how the upwardly mobile deal with the tensions and dilemmas arising from their trajectories and involving their professions. In addressing these issues, my findings uncover how interviewees approach their professions with distinctive practices, dispositions, and orientations: while they certainly adapt to the ‘rules of the game’ (Lareau, 2015) structuring their high-status occupations, they also—drawing both on different cultural repertoires and the responsibility to support their families of origin—accommodate the dominant rules according to their own goals, values, and responsibilities. These goals, values, and responsibilities, I argued, are indicative of the *elective* or *agentive* elements structuring their upward trajectories, and informing the ‘supply-side’—and not only the ‘demand-side’—of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 194).

These findings bear implications for the existing body of research addressing these issues. Indeed, they question Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of fields based on an accrual-acquisition resource model, and underpinning research on class-barriers in access to elite employment (Ashley *et al.*, 2015; Macmillan, 2009; Macmillan *et al.*, 2014; Rivera, 2012, 2015) or ‘class ceilings’ in work settings (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). This research usually takes for

granted the underlying logic of this framework—individuals seeking to increase their overall value through the acquisition, conversion and accrual of economic, cultural, and social resources prized in specific occupational fields—, assuming that the upwardly mobile share exactly the same goals, values, or responsibilities, than those from privileged backgrounds. However, if we acknowledge the specific goals, values, and responsibilities, the upwardly may hold, rooted in specific class backgrounds and the cultural repertoires they contain, then we need to rethink the way they navigate high-status occupations in terms of their resources but also—and crucially—*relationally* (Skeggs, 2011), both regarding their ties of origin and those of destination.

Chapter 9.

Family Relations Under Strain: Support, Dislocation, and the Search for Shelter

Introduction

Sofia, an engineer in her mid-thirties we fleetingly met in Chapter 7, welcomes me with her baby in her arms in her small but comfortable flat in Santiago downtown, near the old train station. As I introduce myself and explain in more detail the nature of my research, Sofia listens carefully and calmly. Sitting in a large sofa, and frequently joined by her husband, she projects a noticeable sense of serenity; even after a long day, she looks both poised and relaxed. As we talk about her life and family, however, her initial attitude gradually fades away. Feelings of ambivalence and self-doubt appear with mounting prominence, especially as she elaborates on her changing relationships with her family of origin. As with the vast majority of interviewees, the way she lives, negotiates, and gives meaning to family relations became one of the main themes of our conversation.

Despite her long-range upward trajectory, Sofia feels closely attached to her family of origin. 'I still feel in line with my background of origin, with my family', she assertively tells me. Like almost all interviewees, Sofia not only visits her family regularly in the low-income council in northern Santiago where they live, but she also provides ongoing financial support to both her parents and extended kin. Yet at the same time, Sofia also regrets the growing distance between her current life and that of her relatives. Given her current job as top manager in a large private company and her choice of residence in a middle-class area far from her

childhood neighbourhood, Sofia remarks that most of her relatives now consider her '*la cnica*' (the posh one) and '*pelolais*' (a beauty stereotype tied to thin, tall upper-class women with long, smooth blonde hair).¹⁴³ 'Even my little sisters say it', Sofia tells me, to whom she feels particularly attached. However, unlike her, Sofía's sisters got professional degrees in less prestigious universities and have struggled to find stable employment; in fact, Sofía's siblings still live in the impoverished neighbourhood of their childhood. 'Most of the time this is a joke [Sofía being a *pelolais*]', Sofia explains. 'But they also mean it', thus implying the boundary her relatives draw between them and her, setting them apart. After a pause, Sofía briefly but emphatically adds: 'it hurts'.

Sofía attempts to make sense of the dislocation of her family ties by placing them within the wider narrative structuring upward mobility in contemporary Chile: 'there is this whole *encuadre individualista* (individualistic framing): to go up, up, up... and out', she says. 'You are expected to climb up like foam, on your own, and that makes it difficult to maintain or create a positive feedback with your family, with your background'. Sofia critically separates herself from the 'individualistic framing' tied to upward mobility, that entails success only for a few and disrupts key family ties. In a society with very low institutional protections from the market and a highly privatised welfare system, however, those wider family ties are the principal source of collective and normative support for individuals (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2006). Sofía is well aware of this; and to a large extent, this is why she would like to rise with her family, not out of it (cf. Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989): 'I feel sorry to have to get away from them. Get out of my roots. I feel sorry that professionals have to get away from our families. *Es una pena* (it is a shame)', she laments.

¹⁴³ Once again, this is a strong indication of the impossibility of separating class background from ethnicity in the Chilean context.

Sofia's challenging distancing from her family of origin has been partially tempered by the shelter she has found in her spouse. Like most interviewees, Sofia developed her intimate life with a partner sharing with him a comparable social origin and upward trajectory. Brought up in a poor neighbourhood in Santiago, her spouse made his way to higher education and later into post-graduate schooling via Instituto Nacional. At the time of our interview, Sofia and her spouse had a relationship spanning for more than fifteen years. 'We share the same story', she notes. 'That is a key thing for our lives and our relationship', Sofia further points out, while her husband approvingly nods sitting beside her. As I address below, their intimate life, mirroring the bulk of interviewees, has become a central refuge where to find a shelter from the dislocating effects tied to their long-range upward trajectories.

In this chapter, I address the private and intimate lives of the long-range upwardly mobile in Chile. I move from the public realm of work (Chapter 8) to the private sphere of interviewees to examine how they live, negotiate, and give meaning to family relations as adults. In dialogue with research addressing the relationship between the upwardly mobile and their backgrounds of origin (e.g., Bourdieu, 1993b; Curl *et al.*, 2018; Curl, 2013; Sennett and Cobb, 1972), I analyse both the dislocating effects tied to long-range upward mobility and the strategies to re-find belonging in family life. Against a specific backdrop marked by a shattered working-class movement, a highly privatised and defective welfare system, and a strong dependence on family ties ((Valenzuela *et al.*, 2006; Valdés *et al.*, 2006; Araujo and Martucelli, 2012b), my findings uncover a strong attachment and moral obligation towards their families of origin, but less so for a broader identification with the working-classes or the poor. While this close attachment is sustained by several forms of support that interviewees provide to their families of origin, it also coexists with manifold tensions they experience with their ties of origin and which are closely connected to their class dislocation.

Within this intricate and unstable relational web, I argue that the long-range upwardly mobile struggle to affirm a lasting sense of identity and belonging.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Firstly, I show how interviewees maintain ties with their backgrounds of origin. Secondly, I move on to examine the concrete ways in which the interviewees remain attached to their families of origins, explaining how this is rooted in the responsibility they feel to reciprocate to their families, most of whom live under precarious economic conditions. Thirdly, I reveal how their ties with their families of origin are nonetheless impregnated with growing tensions and incomprehension as they delve deeper into their careers and adulthood. Fourthly, I address how interviewees make efforts to remedy the effects of their dislocated relationships with their backgrounds of origin by trying to find shelter in their own intimate relationships. Fifthly, I provide some concluding remarks by placing my findings in dialogue with the existing literature.

The Family: the Key Bond to their Class of Origin

Echoing Sofia's example and that of the vast majority of interviewees, Carmen, the doctor we first encountered in Chapter 5 and have followed throughout most of the ensuing chapters, also feels a close attachment to her background of origin. However, unlike the majority of interviewees, Carmen's attachment to her background of origin is not confined just to her family; she, too, displays a strong sense of responsibility and commitment towards the '*clase trabajadora*' (working-class). This attachment that Carmen specifically declares towards her broader background of origin is deeply rooted in her family history and how she carries her distinctive (hi)story with her throughout her life. As I noted in Chapter 5, particularly relevant was the membership of her paternal grandfather to the Communist Party and the potent cultural repertoire—the enlightened working-class culture—he transmitted

to his granddaughter. For Carmen, all this defined a strong loyalist stance tied to upward mobility.

For Carmen, currently employed in public hospital in a low-income council in Santiago, her family history made her consider her ‘class’ as ‘fundamental’ for who she is, notwithstanding the distance created by her upward trajectory. As she explains regarding the ties to her background of origin and her occupational choices:

‘I feel part of the working, proletarian class, despite today being a doctor ... Today I have, I could earn a lot of money, I could have many resources, live a life perhaps at a better standard. But today I decide not to do that [*emphasis in her voice*], because I want to give priority to other aspects. I do not want to stop being from the working-class. Because I feel that the moment I stop being from this class...I do not want to leave my roots to the working-class because I feel that would be like betraying my class, and my reality, and my family, and my grandfather, you see? I just do not want to be part of the ghetto of doctors and their different, narrow concerns ... Because today my reality needs me [*emphasis in her voice*], in the public hospital [*emphasis in her voice*], in the neighbourhood of my parents. So, that is why I decide not to leave my class ... For example, by involving myself in workshops in the women’s prison on women’s health. So, for those little achievements... I know I am not going to change the world through that, but it allows me to be connected with the reality of the working-class from which I come from’.

Carmen’s description of her attachment to her background of origin closely brings together her family, her neighbourhood, and the people inhabiting it, with a firm sense of belonging to the working class. In contrast to her colleagues and their ‘narrow concerns’, Carmen projects an image of herself as someone still connected to her roots through her professional choices (more on this in Chapter 8). Her account is deeply infused by a clear awareness of the class she comes from, and a robust moral refusal to distance herself from it, which she sees as a form of betrayal. Carmen works hard to somehow reconcile her current status as a doctor with her origins, attempting to avoid the feelings of pain, loss, and guilt, frequently experienced by upwardly mobile—especially in societies, like Britain, historically characterised by a dense, cohesive, and durable working-class culture (see e.g., Hoggart, 2009[1957]; Loveday, 2014; Reay, 1997).

Yet, however powerfully articulated Carmen's sense of attachment to her background of origin is, narratives like hers are a minority among interviewees: only 9 out of my 60 interviewees explicitly engage in their relationship with their group of origin in terms of social class. By contrast, most interviewees, like Sofia, retain a sense of pride about their origins and value hard-working people from similar backgrounds, very often rooted in a strong awareness of the multigenerational making of their upward mobility in their families (see Chapter 5), yet without a robust sense of belonging to larger collectives such as the working class. My findings thus suggest a sturdy attachment and moral obligation with the background of origin in its narrowest definition (family), but less so for wider or more abstract definitions such as the *clases populares* or the poor in general.

This prevailing attitude among interviewees has been amply shaped by the momentous transformations taking place in Chile in recent decades. These substantial changes, especially those affecting the Chilean *clases populares*, find their origins in the pioneering implementation of neoliberal policies in Chile since the mid-1970s onwards. Rooted in Pinochet's dictatorship, as I noted in Chapter 3, these policies included macroeconomic stabilisation, deregulation of prices and markets, the privatisation of public enterprises and social services, and brutal political repression. The former *clases populares* and their variegated organisations (e.g., anarchist-led 'resistance societies' or trade unions; the Communist and Socialist Parties), once a particularly vigorous and successful working-class movement in Latin America (Angell 1972), were the main victims of Pinochet's authoritarian rule (Winn 2004), crushed by the combined impact of the loss of labour protections, deindustrialisation, and political

repression. It is this shattered working-class movement that Carmen refuses to leave behind.¹⁴⁴

Table XII: Identification and ties maintained with background of origin

	Prevalence
Family*	98,3 %
Neighbourhood**	36,7 %
<i>Clases populares</i> ***	15 %

Note: percentages calculated on the basis of the identification and ties maintained with their background of origin reported by each interviewee. * Family ties include both nuclear and extended kin. ** Neighbourhood ties include visit to neighbours and other local residents. *** *Clases populares* include both a wider identification with the working-classes and the quest to develop and sustain ties with these members through concrete activities, such as support for local organisation or undertakings mobilise by members of that class.

As a result of these vast changes, Chile has become a society in which the market gained increasing prominence, not just for allocating economic resources, but also—and crucially—as an institutional mechanism of social coordination and integration. This trend is particularly visible in the decline of risk-pooling, a privatised welfare system, and precarious labour market (Marcel and Rivera, 2008; Sehnbruch, 2006). In turn, large-scale changes in welfare arrangements have had an impact on Chilean culture and morality (MacClure and Barozet, 2016). Indeed, under such circumstances, the former *clases populares* have developed a tendency towards ‘middle-classness’ (Marambio 2018); and values such as self-reliance, hard work, and discipline, have attained growing notoriety regarding opportunities for upward

¹⁴⁴ Here the contrast between the British and Chilean context may prove instructive. As I noted in Chapter 3, compared to the English *working-classes*, the Chilean *clases populares* emerging in the late nineteenth century never developed the same cultural density, as of a world almost entirely self-contained and set apart from the rest of society (e.g., Thompson 2013 [1963]; Hoggart 2009 [1957]). In more recent decades, if both the English working-classes and the Chilean *clases populares* have been negatively impacted by neoliberal policies, the scope and depth of this has not been the same: in Chile the latter were overwhelmed by Pinochet’s (1973-1990) prolonged dictatorship and the policies applied since the recovery of democracy, both enfeebled and fragmented in a way that the British working-classes never experienced.

mobility and work achievements (ETE, 2008; ELSOC, 2016-2018; Landerretche and Lillo, 2011)—which are many of the defining traits underpinning the neoliberal framework for valuing education outlined in Chapter 5. In this new cultural landscape, private strategies are considered morally virtuous, while those who rely on public welfare tend to hide it under the threat of being dishonoured (see Chapter 6 for how this works regarding education).

However, the ‘neoliberalisation’ of Chilean society and culture has not diminished the fundamental role played by families. On the contrary, families have increased their functions and expectations, though very often—and especially so for disadvantaged families—without the means to sustain these multiple functions, demands, and expectations (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2006; Valdés *et al.*, 2006; Araujo and Martucelli, 2012b). The particular attitude interviewees affirm to practice towards their families of origin—visiting them regularly and providing ongoing financial support to both nuclear and extended kin—needs to be understood against this specific backdrop. For Carmen and Sofia alike, it is this centrality of family relations which is crucially at stake as a result of their long-range upward trajectories.¹⁴⁵ To explore the specific nature and scope of these ties among interviewees, I now turn.

‘Devolverle la Mano a mis Viejos’: Giving Back to the Family of Origin

The prevailing inclination to remain attached to families of origin is conveyed as the desire to ‘*devolverle la mano a mis viejos*’ (‘give back to my old parents’). This is the way Carmen gives voice not just to the need she feels to pay homage to her parents’ efforts and sacrifices that

¹⁴⁵ Significantly, too, this specific connection interviewees proclaim to maintain towards their families of origin lies in contrast with what occurs in other national contexts. While in the US the concrete bonds with the family of origin remain weak or infrequent, in France almost inexistent or broken, in India they retain a close commitment to both their family and caste of origin (Naudet 2018[2012]). In Chile, as in the rest of Latin America, kin ties are the basis of welfare providing support for elders, young people before leaving home, and adolescent mothers (Sunkel, 2006).

they made, but also to reciprocate them ‘in whatever way’ she can now as a doctor. ‘Giving back to my parents’ is the other side of the coin of the ‘mandate’ (Castillo, 2016) tied to upward mobility identified in Chapter 5. This is typically felt as a strong moral commitment to return or repay the support received from the home of origin as soon as interviewees are in the position to do so. In Carmen’s case, like most interviewees, the moral responsibility to remain attached and give back to her parents began well before she finished her undergraduate studies.

Giving back to their families adopts several forms. One prominent way is manifested in the frequent visits my interviewees have both to their nuclear and other extended kin.¹⁴⁶ Fernando, the middle-aged economist we met in Chapter 8, provides a good illustration of these regular visits to his family of origin. Fernando currently lives in an upper-middle-class council in north-eastern Santiago, at a substantial geographical distance from the impoverished neighbourhood located in the southern part of the capital in which he grew up. Still, Fernando regularly visits his relatives: ‘almost every weekend’, he tells me. And he makes sure that his children visit their grandmother as well. During our interview, Fernando emphasised how he enjoys visiting his background of origin, both to see his parents and to catch up with ‘old friends and neighbours’, revisiting shared ‘anecdotes’ from the past. Fernando’s attitude is echoed by the vast majority of interviewees. Although, unlike himself, not many remain attached to their neighbourhoods of origin with the same closeness they maintain with their families, their frequent visits to their kin can be considered as one of the ‘practical arrangements’ (Pasquali, 2014) that the upwardly mobile use to face the social displacement tied to their upward trajectories.

¹⁴⁶ This often occurs against a backdrop in which the upwardly mobile leave their ‘old’ neighbourhoods to ‘migrate’ residentially because of the acute segregation that separate social classes in Chile’s urban areas (cf. UNDP, 2017, p. 171). *Social* mobility is thus almost invariably linked to *geographical* mobility.

Table XIII: Type of attachment and support provided to families of origin

	Prevalence
Regular visits*	86, 7 %
Financial support**	93, 3 %
Other forms of support***	81, 7 %

Note: percentages calculated on the basis of the identification and ties maintained with their background of origin reported by each interviewee. * Regular visits to relatives include both nuclear and extended kin. ** Financial support includes those who provide economic aid to their relatives either on a sporadic or permanent basis. *** Other forms of support include specific occupation-based resources such as guidance to navigate the health-care system or administrative or legal quandaries.

The significance of these bonds can also be understood from the perspective of their families of origin. This became apparent during a visit Javier—the doctor we met at the end of Chapter 8—and I made to his family. After our first interview, Javier invited me to meet his family in the house he had bought for his mother a few years ago. There, over tea and many home-made biscuits, we talked for more than four hours with Javier’s mother, his wife, and younger siblings, about their family history marked by stark poverty. A family gathering like this, as confirmed by Javier’s siblings, was indeed very frequent. Javier’s ageing mother, though not always actively engaged in the conversation, made sure to express to me her ‘pride’ in the achievements of her offspring, all of whom became professionals against the odds. This visit was a concrete testimony of how long-range upward mobility goes hand in hand with the preservation of the home of origin as a permanent reference space (c.f., Castillo, 2016, p. 222).

Yet the strength of kin relations also involves wider expectations. By the end of the evening, as we prepared to depart, Javier’s mother approached me and earnestly told me: ‘we are close family, as you can see. We remain like that right up until now, keeping in touch’, giving voice

to her own sense of attachment to her family. In saying this, Javier's mother wanted me to bear witness to the strength of her ties with her children, notwithstanding all their success and the distance they have travelled in Chile's social space. While being proud of the educational and occupational accomplishments of her children, she also makes sure to convey to me the normative significance she endows to the fact they remain a 'close family' and 'keeping in touch'. Although obliquely, Javier's mother thus raises the issue of family (dis)loyalty, a common trope in Chile (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012b: 178-180). This issue is often structured around the distinction between those who are 'loyal' to their social origins and social climbers—those who 'deny what they are, where they come from'—often called '*piojos resucitados*' ('reborn louses') (MacClure *et al.*, 2015, p. 452). In remaining attached to his family of origin, Javier is considered to belong to the former group and not the latter.¹⁴⁷

Alongside recurrent visits to their families of origin, interviewees also provide ongoing financial support. Loreto, the engineer we encountered in Chapter 5, illustrates well this. Even before finishing her undergraduate studies, Loreto bought her mother 'a refrigerator, washing machine, and a boiler'. Loreto makes clear this support has continued over the years and 'not just to my mother', implying extensive financial sustenance to other relatives as well. In fact, Loreto has also helped financially her nephews and nieces when they were struggling to pay their school and university fees. This commitment testifies to the moral obligation most interviewees feel to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the home of origin and to promote those family members who are embarked on a similar upward trajectory via education (cf. Castillo, 2016).

¹⁴⁷ Issues of (dis)loyalty tied to upward mobility are certainly not confined to Chile or Latin American nations. In his collaborative book *La Misère du Monde*, Bourdieu (1993b) explores the ambivalent relationship between an upwardly mobile son and his father from the point of view of the latter in France. The persistent ambivalence of the father regarding the upward mobility of his son is expressed by the durable feelings of both desiring his success yet at the same time wanting him to remain close to his background of origin.

The provision of ongoing financial support is widespread among interviewees. To a large extent, the provision of financial aid is driven by the desire to counter the vulnerability of their families of origin. Under a labour market characterised by low salaries in insecure employment for the vast majority of the population (Sehnbruch, 2006), this financial support proves very often an indispensable assistance to attain a better living standard, or to help pay expenses in education or health. But families of origin themselves often demand a stable assistance from their upwardly mobile members. Catherine, the lawyer we encountered in Chapter 7, shows well the type of demands regularly exerted by her own family: ‘my relatives think that *estoy forrada* (colloquial way of saying I am full of money)’, she says. ‘The expectation is that, on every occasion, on every family emergency, I should always contribute [with money]’, she further remarks, underlining the constant pressure she feels subjected to by her relatives. Significantly, this highly prevalent practice may be essential for its low-income recipients but can be economically detrimental for the long-range upwardly mobile. As Ana, the engineer we met at the outset of this research, admits: ‘I give a third of my income every month to support my parents’. In this, Ana represents the rule rather than the exception.

Yet the support interviewees deliver to their families of origin is not confined to financial aid alone. Most of them also mobilise specific occupation-based resources to assist their families. This is especially prevalent in professions like medicine or law. For instance, doctors like Carmen or Javier deploy their knowledge about healthcare system and networks to grant their relatives an adequate or faster access to the poorly funded public health services. Many lawyers, for their part, offer key guidance and savvy to their nuclear or extended kin when navigating administrative or legal quandaries. A very large proportion of interviewees thus provide a *multidimensional* support to their families of origin rooted in their high-status

occupations—indeed a multifaceted ‘capital transfer’ (Pasquali, 2014) bonding the upwardly mobile to their families of origin.

This multiple support, financial or otherwise, is particularly vital at the time of their parents’ retirement—a period of acute challenges for Chileans from disadvantaged backgrounds. Loreto’s case, again, is telling. Having laboured under informal employment most of her working life, Loreto’s mother has no pension for retirement. Like so many interviewees, Loreto has assumed a special care to her ageing mother.¹⁴⁸ In fact, her mother lives with her at the moment. ‘She depends on me now’, Loreto tells me. ‘I am responsible for her’, she further adds, conveying a broader sense of commitment towards her beyond just her material welfare.

It is this *sense of responsibility* as a moral duty towards their families of origin which resonates so widely across interviewees. Indeed, they retain a close commitment to their families of origin, who depend on their upwardly mobile members both in material and affective terms.¹⁴⁹ And here is where ‘*devolverle la mano a mis viejos*’ acquires its fuller meaning. For Loreto, giving back to her mother is embedded in the logic of reciprocity and the set of commitments that follow from it: give, receive, and give back (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012b, pp. 175-178; see more broadly Bloch and Buisson, 1994). Yet the commitments tied to family reciprocity unfold in a wider context marked by a precarious labour market, the sharp decline of risk-pooling, and a privatised and defective welfare system. Under such conditions, kin

¹⁴⁸ Chile was the first nation in the globe to privatise its pensions system during Pinochet’s dictatorship. The defined contribution model relies solely on a mandatory 10 percent contribution from employees; it benefits those who remain in formal employment for much of their working lives making regular payments. Yet Chile’s precarious labour market, composed by a relatively large informal sector (approximately one-third of the population are in irregular employment), means that many people contribute little or nothing over their working lives (see Madero-Cabib *et al.*, 2019).

¹⁴⁹ Similar forms of kin support are reported among the upwardly mobile belonging to ethnic minorities in India (Naudet, 2008, 2018[2012]), France (Sharokni, 2018), and the US (Hill, 2020).

ties tend to be overloaded with functions, demands, and expectations. It is against this specific backdrop that the long-range upwardly mobile also experience numerous flashpoints, tensions, and incomprehension with their ties of origin. To address these issues—a central process in the class dislocation interviewees experience with their ties of origin—I now turn.

‘This Trajectory Isolates You’: Flashpoints, Incomprehension, and Loneliness

The ties interviewees maintain with their families of origin are fused with strains and tensions. Indeed, as the social, cultural, and economic divide between them and their families of origin widens, growing flashpoints and incomprehension arise. I have already outlined some of these strains with the case of Sofia. Given her current job as a manager in a large private company and residence in downtown Santiago, most of her relatives consider Sofia a *‘pelolais’*—a painful comment through which her family reminds her that she does not fully belong to her origins anymore. I now explore how these tensions are experienced by the rest of interviewees; they typically revolve around divergent expectations, relationships, and issues of belonging arising between interviewees and their non- or short-range upwardly mobile members of their families.

One prevalent tension, chiefly affecting female interviewees, concerns opposing attitudes and expectations regarding family choices. María, the doctor we met in Chapter 7, exemplifies well this type of pressure. Although ‘grateful’ and ‘proud’ of her family and upbringing, María also conveys the increasing distance she feels towards her family of origin. María separates herself from what she calls ‘the intrusive *machismo* (sexism)’ of her mother, especially regarding her mother’s expectations concerning marriage and having children. But María also

recognises how her upward trajectory and her decision to postpone marriage and children, has separated her from her extended family. In her own words:

‘Most of my cousins of my age are already having their third *guagua* (baby) [*strong emphasis in her voice*]... None of them studied. So, in my family that was and still is the natural pattern, what had to happen: to get married and have children ... In fact, every time I go to a family gathering, I get a bombardment [*strong emphasise in her voice*] from everyone asking me why I have no children yet, that I am going to get too old, that this and that that ... All my cousins are following the family pattern. It is weird ... We are not in the same tune anymore... That is the uncomfortable truth.’

Like María, most female interviewees find themselves all too often trapped in a conflictive space between the rigidity of the past—as expressed in the expectations and demands of their families of origin—and the new opportunities and worldviews created by their upward trajectories.¹⁵⁰ María further comments on her unsuccessful struggles to explain to her family her own reasons to delay marriage far later than expected, and the incomprehension or uneasiness this engenders in her relatives. She thus feels constantly haunted by the myths, rituals, and models of the traditional, gendered family, transmitted by her family of origin. Behind this tension certainly lies a wider generational transformation at play (Araujo and Martucelli, 2012b, p. 176-177; see also Valdés *et al.*, 2006). Yet this change affects female interviewees in specific ways: the demands of traditional motherhood exerted by their families of origin often confront them as both economically unfeasible and socially undesirable in their new class milieu—often operating with a different set of expectations—and an impediment in developing their professional careers. These wider gendered entanglements constitute an important part of the ‘uncomfortable truth’ to which María alludes to.

Negotiating these conflicting demands is not an easy task. For most female interviewees, opting for having a family of their own all too often means halting their professional careers.

¹⁵⁰ For similar findings in the US, see Curl (2013, Ch. 7).

As Alejandra, the only female lawyer working in a top management position at a prominent mining company, bluntly puts it: ‘when my daughters were born *le quité la pata al acelerador a mi carrera* (I stopped accelerating my career)’. ‘My career today is on *stand-by* (Alejandra uses this expression in English)’, she further admits. Opting for children instead of their careers is a common choice among female interviewees; it reflects well how professional women ‘opt out’ of the labour market because they accept their default caregiving roles, making them financially dependent on partners, at financial risk after separation, and reducing their earning potential (UNDP, 2010, 2020). However, unlike women from privileged backgrounds, the choice of motherhood over work among upwardly mobile females does not release them from the responsibility of helping their families of origin financially. As a result, a life in which autonomy and the accompanying sense of emancipation contained in the promise of upward mobility remains highly elusive for them. This is an experience that runs through virtually all female interviewees.

Alongside marriage and children, further academic training represents another motive for distance between interviewees and their families of origin (on this topic, see Curl, 2013). Confronted with the increasing demands of a heightened credentialised differentiation in the labour market (Brunner, 2012), interviewees, especially younger ones, feel the pressure to continue their academic education as a way to secure occupational or financial stability. For the relatively few interviewees who have undertaken post-graduate training (see Chapter 4), this has implied an additional reason for incomprehension with their ties of origin. Amparo, the lawyer we met in Chapter 8 and who, at the time of our interview, was undertaking doctoral studies, provides a telling example this. For Amparo, her further academic training has amounted to a troubling ‘communication barrier’ with her ageing and frail mother, who is dependent on her. Referring to their current relationship, Amparo says:

‘It seems that we are not in the same world. That is super strong in a family relationship: not being able to share the same experiences, or what one sees as dramatic or cheerful, the other person cannot understand it as you do. I have tried but I cannot. My mother tries to understand how I am doing in my research, but she cannot really. There seems to be a communication barrier: a barrier to understand each other. Sometimes I ask my mother if she wants to read about my research. And she says: “I’m going to get bored”, she tells me. “But not because you write badly, but because it is not my world” [*emphasis in her voice*] ... I have also tried to invite her to come to university, to make her part of my life, but she refuses ... So, even though we share the same roof, we live in different worlds.’

Amparo sturdily conveys not just the difficulties she faces in communicating her accomplishments in post-graduate education to her family. She also manifests a deeper inability—and the accompanying frustration—of not being able to relate significantly to her mother. Thus, despite their desire to remain closely connected to their families of origin, the cultural gap between my interviewees and their parents almost invariably widens. Amparo’s spreading cultural gulf with her family amply resonates with the vast majority of interviewees—a process which tends to intensify as they delve deeper into their careers and adulthood.

This estrangement from their class of origin raises larger issues of belonging. Fernando, the middle-aged economist we have followed throughout this chapter, illustrates well these issues. Despite his frequent visits to his mother and old neighbourhood, Fernando unenthusiastically admits that ‘[his background of origin] is not my niche anymore’. Yet at the same time, all of Fernando’s remarkable success—economic prosperity, expanded cultural horizons, enlarged social networks—has not translated into feeling ‘comfortable’ in his current upper-middle class location. Fernando points to his stubborn ‘discomfort’ and lack of fit he feels with other parents whose offspring attend the same elite private school as his children: ‘I can talk to them, and I do that very often’, he says. ‘But the gap is enormous’, he further remarks. Fernando thus alludes to the substantial privileges and class-based resources their wealthy peers enjoy, which are in stark contrast with his family past—like

most interviewees—marked by previously half-realised or truncated dreams of upward mobility, working-class struggle against adversity, and meritocratic striving (see Chapter 5).

After a pause, Fernando emphatically claims: ‘I do not feel part of the elite of this country. Nor do I want to belong to it’. Significantly, even for someone like Fernando, whose children attend one of the most exclusive private schools in Chile—arguably one the strongest markers of elite membership—he sees his class of destination as still belonging to a different world—economically, socially, and culturally—set apart from his own.¹⁵¹ Fernando thus gives voice to a widespread finding across interviewees: long-range upward mobility does not translate into (a self-perceived) integration to the class of destination, particularly if that class destination is associated with the established elites.¹⁵² Importantly, too, Fernando admits: ‘this trajectory isolates you’. And struggling to find the appropriate words to express himself, he laconically adds: ‘it leaves you in a strange point’.

Fernando’s class dislocation thus re-joins that of Ana as outlined at the outset of this research. Compared to their own parents, both have benefitted from the prospects opened up for them by elite universities and high-status occupations. But at the same time, the cohesive social ties that provide those opportunities with meaning were disrupted along the way. With one foot still caught up in their families of origin and another stepping into highly different social and cultural milieux, most interviewees—like Fernando and Ana—struggle

¹⁵¹ This also raises larger questions concerning the class identification of the offspring of interviewees. Fernando, like others interviewees whose progeny attend elite private schools, express an active concern for the class identification of his children. In this regard, Fernando’s regular visits to his family of origin along with his children testifies to the wider challenges of adjusting to his class of destination from a broad multigenerational perspective—one addressing not just the class identification of first-generation professionals but also that of the subsequent generations. I think this reinforces the need for a broad multigenerational approach to social mobility to assess the ‘long-shadow’ (Lareau, 2015) of class origins not just on life outcomes but also in terms of class identification.

¹⁵² In chapter 7 and 8, I argued that this rejection of elite belonging among interviewees is largely shaped by the repeated incidents of class discrimination and stigmatisation they experience in their interactions with people from privileged backgrounds.

to find a durable sense of belonging between their ties of origin and those of destination. Andrea, the doctor we encountered in Chapter 8, tellingly remarks the *lingering* class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility in the Chilean context:

‘When I left my home there was a giant uprooting. That hit me very hard on my departure from my home, when I came to school in Santiago. Because your family shapes you with a social, cultural background with which you do not *match* (she uses this word in English) afterwards. And you remain *desinsertada* (dis-inserted). I think that people coming from the provinces experience that. And it lingers, in my case, up to this day. I say to myself: “*no funco*” (I cannot work this out), I am a social *huacha* (the term refers to children with no known parents, or whose parents have abandoned them). And that is painful.’

Andrea’s powerful depiction of her own class dislocation seems to give credit to the link between long-range upward trajectories and a durable dispositional cleavage implied in the notion of ‘habitus clivé’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 1091; 1997, p. 79; 2004[2002], p. 127, 140). No longer identified with her family of origin, nor fully integrated to her current class location, Andrea’s sense of belonging is crucially and painfully at stake. Recognising this is very important as it reflects a highly prevalent experience across interviewees, which challenges the ‘acculturation’ hypothesis—assuming psychologically smooth transitions to their new social milieus of destination among the upwardly mobile (see Chapter 2).¹⁵³ Yet at the same time, Andrea’s own account also underlines the *peculiarities* of her long-range upward mobility and associated experience: hailing from the provinces and from a family without a distinctive stance towards mobility (either loyalist or legitimist), Andrea studied at an ordinary state-school before reaching a top university, and has developed her professional career in a work setting where the both the established elites and high-status males prevail. It is this specific combination of factors which has made Andrea’s class dislocation particularly strongly felt.

¹⁵³ Similar findings are reported in Britain (Hoggart 2009[1957]; Reay, 2017) and France (Bourdieu, 1989, 2004[2002]; Naudet 2018[2012]).

However, the combination of these intervening or mediating factors—geographical origin, cultural repertoire, gender, type of schooling, occupational environment—is not uniform across interviewees. Many interviewees coming from *liceos emblemáticos*, as I noted in Chapter 6 and 7, retain both a strong sense of self-identification with their former schools as wider institutional channels enhancing meritocratic mobility and lasting social ties acting as travelling companions. For instance, Jorge, the lawyer we met in Chapter 5 and 7, is clear about the importance he gives to the friends he made at Instituto Nacional: ‘they are my second family, in a way. Like me, they are *institutanos*, we have shared all this path together’. Significantly, this strong identification with their former schools and traveling companions offers them a protective shelter to face the class dislocation tied to their upward trajectories. By contrast, for most interviewees educated in ordinary public or voucher schools, or whose backgrounds of origin were rooted outside Santiago, overcoming the impacts of their class dislocation and finding a lasting sense belonging remains far more challenging (more on this in Chapter 10).

‘If He was not There, I would Feel Super Alone’: Romantic

Relationships as a Shelter from Dislocation?

The class dislocation associated with long-range upward mobility not only disrupts ties with the class of origin. It also shapes the realm of intimate relations interviewees forge as adults. As suggested at the outset of this chapter, Sofia’s distancing from her family of origin has been partially eased by the refuge she has been able to find in her spouse and in the making of her own family. This quest for shelter in intimate relations unfolds in a wider background not only characterised by precarious labour conditions and reduced institutional protections from the market, but also one with very modest levels of associativity (ENB, 2006-2014;

Valenzuela and Cousiño, 2000) and interpersonal trust (Martínez 2001; UNDP 2010). In Chile, as in much of Latin America, people trust only a very small number of relatives and acquaintances.¹⁵⁴ In such circumstances, many have remarked a potent trend towards a withdrawal into family life in recent decades (e.g., Güell, 2002; UNDP, 2002).

To be sure, these developments shape the wider population, and not just those experiencing long-range upward mobility. Yet the formation of intimate ties, as I now go on to address, remains a particularly pressing issue for the long-range upwardly mobile. The growing distance from their families of origins makes all the more challenging their need to find a refuge of their own in their intimate lives. Ana's experience, the engineer we met in Chapter 1 and have followed throughout this research, is telling in this regard. During our interview, Ana strongly emphasised the intellectual and emotional support she receives from her long-standing partner, now fiancée. Referring to the troubles and pains Ana is experiencing at the moment with her ageing parents—both of whom are financially dependent on her—, she says:

‘[Her fiancée] is fundamental, fundamental. Because he supports me. I mean he has been my support in everything really. He understands my dad and his health issues and has been very gentle with that. He helps me and guides me with my family, with my work issues. I can cry with him. He has been strong for me ... I think that if he was not there, I would feel super alone.

As Ana makes explicit, her fiancée has not only been key in providing indispensable support and understanding regarding her parents. But in highlighting this, Ana also points out wider support that she receives from her fiancée: a guidance to negotiate relationship with her ties

¹⁵⁴ In Chile, for instance, people have fewer friends, they have less support in case of need, and a third of the population has only one person (or no one) with whom to talk about important topics. Since the recovery of democracy, interpersonal trust has remained dramatically low; currently, only 19 percent of the population trusts strangers (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2020).

of origin, temper the loneliness that come with upward trajectories, and providing crucial help to stabilise her class dislocation.

Ana's experience is far from unique. Fernando, the economist we have encountered earlier in this chapter, confirm this. Revealingly, Fernando mentions his own family as one of the few places where he feels 'well, understood, and comfortable'. No longer identified with his ties of origin, nor entirely incorporated to his current class location, Fernando devotes all his free-time to his nuclear family: 'I am a super pro-family type', he says. 'I dedicate myself fully to my family', he further and proudly remarks.

Although both Fernando and Ana heavily rely on their intimate relations to face their dislocation, the way they do it is very different and compounded by their genders. Unlike Fernando, Ana underlines how her partner has been vital to face the persistent challenges related both to a competitive job market and issues of belonging: 'both of us have struggled in developing our professional careers, in finding meaning in what we do professionally in this arid, insecure world', Ana comments. With the economic responsibilities towards her parents and her own financial instabilities, Ana intensely feels the need to work and save. But at the same time, Ana, already in her mid-30s, equally feels the unavoidable pressure to make a choice about motherhood: 'I am not sure about having children, really', she tells me. 'We have discussed this a lot with [her partner], and we do not know what we are going to do about it. But I do not have all the time in the world to make that choice', she further emphasises.

For female interviewees like Ana, it is not just their class dislocation that is at stake. They also confront, as I noted above, what is commonly felt as a mutually exclusive choice between devote their energies to raise a family of their own or developing their professional careers.

Significantly, confirming the normative priority of family over work among women in Chile (e.g., Guzmán *et al.*, 1999; Thumala, 2007; Undurraga 2011), all older female interviewees—except for the only one belonging to the older cohort who did not marry and has no children—chose to raise their families to the detriment of their professional careers. Unlike their male counterparts, a life in which financial stability—and a corresponding sense of autonomy—contained in the promise of upward mobility remains doubly fragile for female interviewees.

These significant gender differences notwithstanding, what resonates so amply across interviewees is their similar choice of partner (see Table XIV). Indeed, much like Sofia, Ana and Fernando, Rosa, the lawyer we met in Chapter 7 and 8, confirms this. Rosa's spouse has a similar social background and upward trajectory. Raised in a broken family, Rosa's husband serendipitously made his way upwards, finding the crucial help of a mentor who suggested law as a career at a crucial juncture in his life. Significantly, finding important echoes in her own life, Rosa acknowledges: 'For me his story is super important for how we get along, how we want to form our family, how we relate with our families of origin.' Rosa's account is thus revealing of both the specific modes of partner preferences among interviewees *and* how romantic partners contribute to stabilise their class dislocation. Importantly, too, it is with those sharing a comparable *class origin* and *trajectory* that the intimate lives of the long-range upwardly mobile can thrive.

A second group, composed by seven interviewees, established romantic or marital relationships with foreigners rather than nationals. Andrea, the doctor we also met in Chapter 8 and has also accompanied us in this chapter, is one of them. When completing her post-graduate education abroad, Andrea met a bus-driver who soon became her husband. 'He is not a professional, but I feel completely well with him', Andrea tells me. She describes his

spouse as ‘affectionate, caretaker, supportive’; someone who has become her main source of emotional support, providing an invaluable shelter for her social and cultural dislocation. Importantly, Andrea remarks: ‘I do not feel judged by him as I have felt judged in Chile’. It is that absence of judgement, Andrea suggests, which has been vital for her and her relationship. Still, she also acknowledges that part of the difficulties her husband has faced are related to the ‘classism’ still prevailing in upper-middle-class or upper-class circles in Chile: ‘even though he is [European]’, she says, ‘people look down on him because he is not a professional.’

Table XIV: Intimate relationship forged by origin of romantic/marital partner

	Prevalence
Partner or spouse sharing similar upward trajectory	83, 3 %
Partner or spouse of foreign origin	11, 7 %
Partner or spouse from upper-middle-class or upper-class background	5 %

Note: percentages calculated on the basis of the type of romantic or marital relation reported by each interviewee.

Andrea’s experience is very telling of the barriers to forge cross-class marriages for the long-range upwardly mobile in Chile. Sebastián, another doctor, is one of the 3 interviewees who has established an enduring intimate relationship with a partner from upper-middle class or upper class backgrounds. Sebastián describes her wife as someone ‘privately educated and coming from an upper-middle class family’, underlining their dissimilar social origins and family resources. However, while emphasising these important differences of background

and upbringing, Sebastián also makes sure that his wife ‘does not belong to the traditional elite’ and that they also share ‘pretty similar political views and values’ as left-leaning people.

Sebastián thus puts into stark relief the complex nature of the social closure at the very top of the Chilean social structure, and how this can shape the type of intimate relationships the long-range upwardly mobile can establish. Indeed, belonging to Chile’s upper-class is not just defined by strong residential segregation patterns (Sabatini *et al.*, 2001, 2010), exclusive private education (Madrid, 2016; Seminarium, 2003), family names (Aguilar, 2011), and membership to conservative religious movements (Thumala, 2007). It is also sealed through matrimonial alliances (Hunneus, 2013). As I noted in Chapter 3, matrimonial alliances have been one of the most effective—but also one of the most restrictive—mechanism for diversifying the ranks of established elites throughout Chile’s modern history (e.g., Jocelyn-Holt, 2008; Stabili, 1996; Vicuña, 2008[2001]). However, in the private sphere of intimate and marital relations, the vast majority of interviewees face a hidden ‘class ceiling’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). And this often overlooked form of inequality—the restricted access to intimacy that the vast majority of interviewees experience—remains largely under-researched.¹⁵⁵

These findings—the existence of a ‘class ceiling’ at the top in terms of affective relations and the stabilising role of romantic partners to face class dislocation—reveal a double-faced phenomenon brought together by the specific trajectory of the long-range upwardly mobile experience. This research thus foregrounds the significance of *class trajectory* in the study of social mobility and assortative mating (see also Toft and Jarness 2020, p. 21). As interviewees continue to face a ‘matrimonial closure’ (Hunneus 2013) at the top, my findings draw greater

¹⁵⁵ For a partial exception examining cross-class marriages in the US, see Streib (2015).

attention to the upper echelons of society in the study of assortative mating processes—an issue largely overlooked by the mainstream research (e.g., Blau and Duncan, 1967; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Blossfeld, 2009; Glass, 1954; Kalmijn, 1991). At the same time, the highly prevalent choice of partners sharing a comparable class origin and trajectory among interviewees, calls for greater consideration of the potential role romantic or marital partners play as stabilising agents contributing to face the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility.¹⁵⁶ Once again, this is particularly relevant in Latin American societies, which depend heavily on family networks for both support (material and emotional) and wellbeing.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined how interviewees live, negotiate, and give meaning to family relations as adults. Against a specific backdrop marked both by a highly privatised and defective welfare system and a strong dependence on family ties, my findings reveal a strong attachment and moral obligation towards their families of origin, but less so for a wider identification with the Chilean *clases populares*. This close attachment to their families of origin is sustained by several forms of support that they provide to their families, manifold tensions, and their quest for shelter in the making of their own families and intimate lives. Within this intricate and unstable relational web, I have shown how interviewees struggle both to face the dislocating impacts tied to their long-range upward trajectories and affirm a lasting sense of identity and belonging, but also recognised the multiple sources that can shape this process.

¹⁵⁶ For very partial remarks on this topic in France, see Naudet (2018[2012], pp. 230-1) and Pasquali (2014, pp. 348-9).

These findings contribute to existing research in at least two main areas. Firstly, they underline that dislocating impacts of long-range upward mobility well beyond the link between long-range upward trajectories and the durable dispositional cleavage suggested in the Bourdieusian notion of ‘habitus clivé’. By contrast, my findings emphasise the role of a number of intervening or mediating factors—geographical origin, cultural repertoire, gender, schooling, and occupational environment—, and their multiple combinations, suggesting a great deal of variation in terms of the dislocating effects of long-range upward mobility. Secondly, these findings highlight the significance of *class trajectory* in the study of social mobility and assortative mating—an aspect overlooked within existing scholarship (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Blossfeld, 2009; Glass, 1954; Kalmijn, 1991). In particular, greater attention to class trajectory in assortative mating studies could improve our knowledge about processes of social closure at the top but also about the dynamic interplay between early and later class conditioning underpinning the choice of romantic or marital partners among the upwardly mobile.

Taken together, Chapter 7, 8, and 9 underline the *double-faced* experience tied to long-range upward mobility in Chile. They demonstrate the specific nature and scope of the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility, which confronts interviewees with a paradoxical situation: while they are aware they are the embodiment of ‘meritocratic success’ according to prevailing meritocratic standards, they struggle to provide those opportunities with meaning—a force persistently fashioning a fragile sense of belonging. Yet throughout the same chapters, I have also recognised how the long-range upwardly mobile, time and again, develop and deploy strategies to re-find belonging and meaning. As such, they need

to be seen as active agents, constantly developing strategies to re-find themselves and a wider sense of belonging in Chilean society, however difficult that search is and remains.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Jules Naudet (2011: 56) similarly speaks of the ‘two faces of social mobility’, but for him those two faces refer to the ‘costs’ (e.g., emotional, psychological) of upward mobility on the one hand, and the ‘benefits’ (e.g., material, symbolic) also tied to it (see also Friedman, 2014, 2016).

Part Three:

**Taking stock of the
experience of long-range
upward mobility.**

L'ineptie consiste à vouloir conclure ... Contentons-nous du tableau.

—Gustave Flaubert, 1850

Chapter 10.

Understanding the Experience of Mobility in Highly Unequal Societies: Towards a Cultural and Multigenerational Approach

Recapitulation

In Chile, as in most Western nations, arguments about social mobility strike a fundamental nerve in the legitimacy of contemporary societies (e.g., Engel and Navia, 2006; Peña, 2020; Santa Cruz, 2017; Sapelli, 2016). Indeed, mobility is not only considered a key pointer in the efficient allocation of economic resources, but also in sustaining a fair meritocratic system. As such, it is a crucial signal of both prosperous economies and open societies (e.g., Arrow *et al.*, 2000; Mitnik *et al.*, 2013; Torche, 2015). Debates about mobility usually involve questions about (re)distribution (who gets what) and how this changes (or not) across generations. But these issues also raise vital questions—though often less talked about—revolving around recognition, inclusion, and voice, tied to the concrete experience of social mobility. The stakes *vis-à-vis* social mobility are therefore particularly high.

Yet, for all its wide-ranging significance, social mobility has been predominantly studied in terms of aggregates or rates, focusing on the association between macro-level factors and mobility outcomes. In this doctoral dissertation, by contrast, I have tried to give voice to those who best embody the meritocratic ideal across western societies: people from working-

class backgrounds and reaching high-status occupations via elite universities. In so doing, I did not primarily rely on the opinion of leaders, economic dynamics, or macro-sociological narratives, although I used all of them in critical dialogue with my findings. Rather, focusing on how people experience unlikely upward trajectories into high-status professions in a highly unequal Latin American society, I foregrounded the multifaceted ways in which they themselves negotiate and adjust their sense of themselves when shifting from a working class position into ones traditionally occupied by the elites.

In this endeavour, I studied the experience of long-range upward mobility in Chilean society. Chile stands out as an exemplary case study in the Global South. In switching from a unique experiment of democratic socialism to a dictatorship at the forefront of neoliberal restructuring, Chilean society has been a true laboratory for social change in recent decades. Throughout this period, Chile not only became the first nation to implement pioneering, radical, and systematic neoliberal policies—anticipating large-scale economic and institutional developments later applied across the globe (Fourcade and Babb, 2003; Ruiz, 2019; Valdés, 2020[1995])—but also experienced substantial economic growth, expanding educational opportunities, and rising meritocratic beliefs in the population. Based on these trends, and despite persistent inequality and a strong social closure at the top, many have celebrated Chile’s ‘success story’ as the Latin American land of meritocracy and upward mobility (Santa Cruz, 2017; Sapelli, 2016; World Bank, 2013).

Chile therefore represents a particularly interesting case for examining the experience of long-range upward social mobility into the upper echelons of society. In tackling this crucial issue, I have focused on those who—like Ana, with whom I opened the introductory chapter of this research—were the first in their families to reach high-status occupations—law, medicine, and engineering—after attending Chile’s most selective and prestigious

universities: UCH and PUC. It is this specific type of upward trajectory, and its associated experience, which is at the heart of this doctoral dissertation.

Based on an extensive qualitative research (including in-depth interviews and participant observation), I have addressed the experience of long-range upward mobility by asking the following questions: How have the long-range upwardly mobile been shaped by the main institutional channels (family, education, high-status occupations) underpinning their upward trajectories? How does this process differ along class and gender lines? How have they navigated both the class dislocation and search for belonging tied to meritocratic success?

Taken as a whole, this research uncovers three core findings:

- 1) Reaching high-status occupations via elite universities does not translate into (a self-perceived) integration to the class of destination among the long-range upwardly mobile.

Throughout their upward trajectories, the long-range upwardly mobile become aware of the social distance still separating those hailing from privileged backgrounds and those—like themselves—coming from disadvantaged origins. That sense of social distance is based both on the strong awareness of their *multigenerational* upward trajectories and the *relational* inequalities experience with peers or colleagues from elite origins. The long-range upwardly mobile's sense of difference regarding their class of destination is deeply rooted in stories of their family past—of previously half-realised or truncated dreams of upward mobility, of a hard-wearing struggle against adversity, of meritocratic striving. To an important extent, it is the living memory of these broad multigenerational family (hi)stories that frames their own sense of identity and inhibits their identification with

their class of destination. But their sense of difference is also (re)created by *cumulative* incidents of class stigmatisation and discrimination they experience in their interactions with the elites at top universities and in the exercise of high-status occupations. Significantly, such incidents are boundary-marking, liminal experiences: they generate a very concrete sense that the elites still belong to a different world—economically, culturally, and socially—set apart from the one the long-range upwardly mobile are entering into. This process largely accounts for the lack of identification they experience with their ties of destination, especially if that destination is associated with the established elites. And, rather than diminish, that perception persists as they move deeper into adulthood.

- 2) Although long-range upward mobility is experienced as a sharp discontinuity regarding their class of origin, they remain closely attached to their families of origin.

Against a specific backdrop marked by a shattered working-class movement, a highly privatised and defective welfare system, and a strong dependence on family ties, the long-range upwardly mobile proclaim a strong attachment and moral obligation towards their families of origin, but less so for wider or more abstract definitions such as the working class. This close attachment to their families of origin is sustained by various forms of support they provide to them: visiting them regularly and providing ongoing financial support to both nuclear and extended kin. Nevertheless, at the same time, the long-range upwardly mobile experience manifold tensions with their families of origin—typically revolving around divergent expectations, relationships, and issues of belonging arising between them and the non- or short-range upwardly mobile members of their families. To a large extent, this process accounts for the class dislocation the long-range upwardly mobile experience with their ties of origin. But no longer identified with their families of

origin, nor fully integrated to their current class location, they struggle to affirm a lasting sense of themselves. Under such conditions, most devote themselves to the quest for shelter in their own private and intimate lives, very often with partners sharing with them a similar class origin and upward trajectory.

- 3) Long-range upward mobility is thus shaped by a *double-faced* experience: the class dislocation tied to their upward trajectories *and* their constant search to re-find belonging and meaning.

Class dislocation unfolds in and over time, both regarding their ties of origin and those of destination, usually starting upon arrival at elite universities and then intensifying as the long-range upwardly mobile move deeper into adulthood. As a result, the long-range upwardly mobile find themselves in a paradoxical situation: they are aware that they are the embodiment of ‘success’ according to prevailing meritocratic standards, yet they do not feel they have a firm sense of collective belonging—as stable and meaningful social ties—to which they can lastingly anchor that ‘success’. And yet, time and again, the long-range upwardly mobile deploy strategies to re-find belonging and meaning, most frequently in their own private and intimate lives but also in the way they approach their professions and in the specific work they do. However difficult that trying quest is, the long-range upwardly mobile remain *active agents*—not passive ones—constantly developing strategies to re-find themselves and a sounder place to belong in Chilean society. Significantly, however, that quest is largely dependent on a number of intervening or mediating factors underpinning their upward trajectories: the cultural repertoires tied to their backgrounds of origin, gender, school trajectory, geographical origin, as well as specific occupational settings shaping their professional lives.

In this final chapter, I reflect back on the main findings and analytical themes developed throughout this research. In particular, I highlight and discuss some of the analytical gains made by this study, but also outline the main challenges ahead, taking stock of unrealised objectives and the potential for future development. As such, and in a Flaubertian spirit, this doctoral dissertation is an invitation to further research, reflection, and debate.

Analytical Gains and New Perspectives for the Study of Social Mobility

Towards a cultural and multigenerational approach

Throughout this thesis, I have argued for the need to move from the ‘big’ occupational-based approach championed by British sociologist John Goldthorpe towards a *cultural* and *multigenerational* perspective on social mobility. For a long time, mainstream mobility research has been dominated by a two-generation (parent-to-offspring) view of intergenerational transmission. According to Goldthorpe (2005), the one-parent one-offspring approach—typically using fathers’ social class to predict the same outcome among their offspring—remained widely used because it offered a standardised base of comparable evidence. However, over the past decade, demographer Robert Mare (2011) has forcefully questioned this approach, exposing how the two-generation association model is largely a sociological construct—one which glosses over the very real impact of multiple resources passed on across more than two generations.

This thesis is closely aligned with Mare’s multigenerational approach to social mobility. But in order to address the full breadth of Mare’s multigenerational research agenda, I have also argued, it is key to cross-fertilise it with contributions associated with cultural sociology.

Despite the huge significance of cultural sociology to inequality and mobility studies over recent decades (e.g., Bennett *et al.*, 2009; Lamont, 1992, 2000; Lamont and Thévenot, 2001; Savage, 2000), this is an area strikingly neglected by Mare. In line with this vast literature, this research confirms that culture matters deeply in order to understand the experience of long-range upward mobility. In particular, my vindication of the role of culture in the study of mobility touches on and further develops two major concepts advanced in cultural sociology: cultural capital and cultural repertoires.

The key notion of *cultural capital*, closely tied to Bourdieusian sociology, highlights how specific cultural endowments and practices (e.g., preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods, and credentials) yield (dis)advantages in specific institutional settings according to the class backgrounds of their holders. Significantly, cultural capital, depending on the specific field in which is deployed, can be leveraged for social advancement (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978:154) but also used for social exclusion (Lamont and Lareau, 1988:156; Bennet *et al.*, 2009; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). Throughout this thesis, taking into account both these possibilities, I have addressed how cultural capital informs the upward trajectory of interviewees—from their childhoods to the exercise of high-status occupations.

As a tool leveraged for social ascent, both within and outside family ties, cultural capital significantly affected the experiences of interviewees. In Chapter 5, for instance, I examined how the families of interviewees mobilise what meagre cultural resources they have (e.g., knowledge of the educational system, books) and specific practices (e.g., rules of writing, reading, self-presentation) to help their children succeed at school and raise their objectives and perceived range of possible futures. In Chapter 6, I further highlighted the often crucial guidance and knowhow provided by figures acting as ‘cultural guides’ (Lareau, 2015) (e.g., extended kin, schoolteachers, school directors) in helping interviewees successfully navigate

the school system.¹⁵⁸ However, in Chapter 7 and 8, I also recognised how low stocks of cultural capital hindered upward trajectories, particularly at elite universities and in elite professions: in these specific settings insufficient cultural capital relative to their privileged peers spurred the class marginality that most interviewees reported. But I also showed how the experience of class marginality *varies* depending on the specific type of cultural capital prevailing in each academic discipline. Thus, while the greater reliance on ‘embodied cultural capital’ (e.g., dress, language, and comportment) in law further hinders the integration of outsiders, the ‘technical capital’ (‘being good at maths’) prevalent in engineering facilitates their incorporation (more on this below).

These findings draw from and contribute to a large body of Bourdieu-inspired research addressing the relationship between cultural capital and social mobility. Firstly, they confirm the need to study both the ‘hidden’ or ‘small’ amounts of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Pasquali, 2014) at the disposal of disadvantaged families, and their family-based practices towards education and school success (Lahire, 2012[1995]). Secondly, my findings confirm the relevance of ‘cultural guides’ (Lareau, 2015) in the transmission of crucial knowledge helping the upwardly mobile make institutions work for them. But they also draw greater analytical attention to the multidimensional support cultural guides provide and how this is connected to specific educational pathways. Thirdly, my findings endorse the need for greater differentiation between ‘embodied cultural capital’ and ‘technical capital’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2019) in order to better understand how disadvantaged students adjust and navigate elite universities.

¹⁵⁸ More specifically, as I detailed in Chapter 6, the intervention of these figures includes a *large array of intervening actors* (extended kin, schoolteachers, school directors), providing *multidimensional* support (helping them on how to study, broadening their cultural horizons, guiding the application process, suggesting options for post-secondary study), and are of far greater significance for students attending specific schools (in the Chilean case, those enrolled at voucher or ordinary state schools but less so for those educated at *liceos emblemáticos*).

Yet, alongside cultural capital, my findings also show that the concept of *cultural repertoires* is crucial to provide a better understanding of the experience of upward mobility (Naudet, 2018[2012]). The products of history, built and passed on across multiple generations over the long-durée in the dynamic interplay between families and wider institutional arrangements, cultural repertoires provide the upwardly mobile with a set of tools (e.g., shared narratives, frames, or scripts) to make sense of the reality they experience. As such, they constitute vital cultural resources both to grasp the plural sources to value education *and* face the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility (more on this below).

In Chapter 5, for instance, I identified the presence of three cultural repertoires—the enlightened working-class culture, the broad public tradition tied to *liceos*, and a more recent neoliberal framework—underpinning a multigenerational family project towards upward mobility. As I examined throughout this research, these cultural repertoires were significant for at least three reasons. Firstly, transmitted by nuclear and extended family ties across generations, I showed how these repertoires offer a *plurality* of ways for valuing education among the upwardly mobile (more on this below). Secondly, these repertoires are translated into practice within families as a potent *moral duty*, structuring an orientation to mobility as a family-based rather than individual undertaking. Thirdly, these different cultural frames are not just relevant to understand the value of education, but also how interviewees adjust to high-status occupations. As I uncovered in Chapter 8, those rooted in the ‘enlightened working-class culture’ or the broad public tradition tied to *liceos* tend to deploy their occupational careers in the public sector compared with those more closely tied to the neoliberal framework (more on this below).

These findings bear implications for Bourdieu’s theoretical model. Firstly, they problematise Bourdieu’s (1984[1979], Ch.7) one-dimensional characterisation of working-class culture as

a ‘culture of the necessary’. On the contrary, the set of three cultural frames identified suggest a great deal of cultural depth and variation informing the way the Chilean *clases populares* relate to education, upward mobility, the work they do, and their relationship with their ties of origin (more on this below).¹⁵⁹ Secondly, this same cultural richness casts doubt on the close link Bourdieu (1989, pp. 147-8) draws between a legitimist family ideology, the upper section of the working classes, and upward mobility. If it is true that most interviewees were already becoming separated from their class of origin, not all of them occupy the upper echelons of the Chilean working classes or rely on a legitimist stance. Thirdly, it is key to pay much greater attention to the relationship between cultural repertoires and the ‘moral significance of class’ (Sayer, 2005)—an aspect largely absent in Bourdieu’s thinking. My findings, by contrast, underline strong moral dispositions, the very core of the ‘mandate’ (Castillo, 2016; see also Pasquali, 2014) configuring upward mobility, both behind the drive to succeed at school and their attempts to remain connected to their families after attending elite universities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that both cultural capital and cultural repertoires are two key analytical devices to address the *double-faced* experience tied to long-range upward mobility: while cultural capital sheds light on both the resources underpinning and the barriers hindering upward trajectories, cultural repertoires highlight the tools (e.g., shared narratives, frames, or scripts) available to individuals for valuing education and facing the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility. But this joint consideration of cultural

¹⁵⁹ Still, it is important to note that in subsequent work—*La Noblesse d’État*, in particular—Bourdieu (1989) offers a much more complex portrait of the culture of the working classes. Here, for instance, Bourdieu delves deeper into multiple linkages, struggles, and orthodox and heterodox discourses around and within institutions on the curriculum, teaching style, and purpose of pedagogy, further differentiating pupil experience and anticipations based on their class origins. Bourdieu (1987) also acknowledges greater internal heterogeneity of class fractions, depicted as clusters or ‘clouds’ of individuals at once different and similar enough in terms of key capitals. However, this should be done by paying greater analytical attention to the ‘different constituencies’ (Reay, 1997) or ‘strata’ (Schwartz, 2002) among the working classes and how that variability, in turn, informs upward trajectories in specific ways.

capital and cultural repertoires also reinforces—as I now go on to discuss—a multigenerational approach to mobility analysis.

Institutional channels of multigenerational cultural transmission: families, schools, and high-status occupations

A voluminous literature recognises that the relationship between origins and destinations is fundamentally mediated or shaped through three main institutional channels: families (e.g., Lareau, 2011; Lareau *et al.*, 2007; Reay *et al.*, 2005), schools (e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, 1970), and occupations (e.g., Heath, 1981; Hout, 1984; Stanworth and Giddens, 1974). Throughout this research, I have argued that these three key institutional channels should have a more central place in the study of social mobility over the long-durée. Here I separately address and discuss the specific significance of each institutional channel identified above from a broad multigenerational cultural transmission approach to social mobility.

The first institutional channel underpinning multigenerational cultural transmission is one of our oldest social institutions: families. My research strongly foregrounds the significance of including the role of grandparents and other extended kin in our understanding of upward mobility and its associated experience. More than half of interviewees were brought up by grandparents or other members of their extended families, living with or close to them. In Chapter 5, I uncovered how this influence was relevant primarily in terms of cultural transmission, but also in the support they provide in childrearing activities. My findings indicate considerable effects over the ‘long durée’ (Bertaux, 1995, p. 73), structured around multifaceted forms of family transmission working far beyond the narrow and co-resident nuclear model. These findings thus invite us to reconsider the role of extended kin in the transmission of both cultural capital and cultural repertoires that are relevant for mobility.

As complex networks of interdependence (cf., Lahire, 2012[1995]), wider family configurations can be important sources of transmission of small but significant forms of cultural capital to the next generations—even within disadvantaged families. But my findings also highlight how families, operating as multigenerational configurations, transmit key cultural repertoires that help the upwardly navigate and make sense of their trajectories.¹⁶⁰

These findings challenge both the conceptualisation of time and the two-generation paradigm prevailing in mobility research. Rather than fixate on measuring mobility between two fixed time points, my findings call for greater attention on how a broader range of cultural resources transmitted through families affect mobility in the present and future. This concern should go well beyond the relevant but narrow focus on causal inference which dominates research on the ‘grandparents effect’ (e.g., Anderson *et al.*, 2018; Engzell *et al.*, 2020; Hällsten and Pfeffer, 2017; Jæger, 2012). My data highlights the need to focus on both larger and smaller processes of accumulation in the study of class and mobility, including the relative significance of multiple resources (Friedman and Savage, 2017). But my findings also invite us to tackle diverse modes of transmission unfolding at the crossroads of family specificities and their relations to both historical continuities and contingencies—and how both, in turn, shape family cultures, aspirations, and strategies (Bertaux and Thompson, 1993, 1997; see also Lahire, 2012[1995]).

Another institutional channel supporting multigenerational cultural transmission crucially relates to educational institutions. My research here suggests the importance to acknowledge

¹⁶⁰ The case of Carmen, the doctor trained at UCH we encountered in Chapter 5 and then followed throughout this thesis, provides a good illustration of this. Embedded in the enlightened working-class culture transmitted by her paternal grandfather, she acquired a distinctive cultural repertoire for vaunting education from her early childhood. This cultural repertoire, accompanied by many other forms of cultural capital passed on by her relatives, was key for her upward trajectory and her efforts to make sense of her position of dislocation.

the differentiated role played by specific educational institutions for upward mobility and its accompanying experience. In Chapter 6 I showed how, in contrast to low-status state or voucher schools, *liceos emblemáticos* transmit to their pupils a wide set of resources which smooth their upward trajectories and adjustment to their class of destination: a solid academic preparation (cultural capital), lasting ties (social capital), and early familiarisation with cultural norms more closely related to elite values and meritocratic mobility (symbolic capital). Based on these vast and rich resources, as I revealed in Chapter 7 and 9, those previously educated at *liceos emblemáticos* enjoy both easier transitions to elite universities and have more resources at their disposal to face the class dislocation tied to their upward trajectories.¹⁶¹ Built on a longstanding tradition of excellence in the public sector organised around salient *republican* and *meritocratic* script, the ability of *liceos emblemáticos* to pass on these valuable resources for mobility is rooted in the leading position they still occupy within the Chilean educational system. Significantly, that tradition of excellence in education in the public sector works as a potent cultural repertoire, both to value education and to position mobility as part of a wider historical narrative.

These findings contribute to an emerging body of research addressing the role of school trajectories for upward mobility. Firstly, as Bourdieu (1989) acknowledged, they confirm the significance of differentiating between dominant and dominated institutions within the educational field and their specific impacts for processes of upward mobility. Secondly, and very much in relation to this, my findings endorse greater analytical attention to the transmission of specific forms of cultural and social capital by different schools or the

¹⁶¹ *Liceos emblemáticos* thus provide a good illustration of what Naudet (2018[2012]) calls ‘instituted ideology’: a highly consistent ideology shared by their families and the institutions the upwardly mobile traverse (e.g., schools, universities, and work) as they move upwards in the social space.

upwardly mobile (Jack, 2014, 2019). But alongside this, they also foreground the need to draw greater attention to the distinctive cultural ethos and self-conception schools manage to instil in their students, which can also act as powerful cultural repertoires for meritocratic mobility, as exemplified with the case of *liceos emblemáticos*. Taken together, these findings point to the need to both widen our understanding of the cultural resources schools transmit to their students and make issues of inertia and accumulation linked with different educational institutions more central to the study of social mobility (see relatedly Savage *forthcoming*).

A third institutional channel sustaining multigenerational cultural transmission concerns high-status occupations. This research highlights both the importance of a more occupationally-specific approach to elite professions and greater recognition of the upwardly mobile's own agency in navigating them. As I showed in Chapter 7, adjustment to elite universities varies according to the specific type of cultural capital prevalent in each profession: while law exhibits greater reliance on 'embodied cultural capital' (e.g., dress, language, and comportment), in engineering 'technical capital' is more clearly predominant. As I argued in Chapter 3, this variation is largely rooted in the specific professional cultures and hierarchies shaping high-status occupations historically. Yet my findings also underline how—as I uncovered in Chapter 8—the upwardly mobile navigate elite professions with distinctive practices, dispositions, and orientations. While they certainly adjust to the 'rules of the game' (Lareau, 2015) structuring their high-status occupations, they also—drawing both on different cultural repertoires and the responsibility to support their families of origin—accommodate the dominant rules according to their own goals, values, and commitments. Significantly, these findings are indicative of the *elective* or *agentic* elements structuring their upward trajectories and informing the 'supply-side' of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 194).

These findings contribute to the research addressing the way the upwardly mobile access and navigate high-status occupations. Firstly, they confirm that elite professions need to be understood not just as occupational aggregates or statistical categories, but rather as historically grown realities with specific configurations in different national contexts (Savage *et al.*, 1992; Palme, 2020). This can only be done through an historically-based approach to high status occupations, which helps to understand the internal hierarchies shaping elite professions and their relative openness or closedness to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Secondly, my findings invite the literature on ‘class ceilings’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019) to pay greater attention to the ‘supply-side’ (i.e., the resources *and* agency of the upwardly mobile), and not just the ‘demand-side’ (i.e., the specificities of each occupational field), shaping social mobility. Acknowledging the specific goals and values the upwardly mobile may hold, rooted in specific class origins and the cultural repertoires they contain, means thinking about mobility into elite professions not only in terms of the resources at stake, but also—and crucially—*relationally* (cf. Skeggs, 2011), that is, recognising the ethos for living, for sociality, and connecting to others that the upwardly mobile may bring with them to high-status occupations.

Taken as a whole, I posit that the three institutional channels under consideration—families, schools, and high-status occupations—should be made more central in mobility analysis. This perspective allows for much greater recognition of the complex linkages between institutions and cultural forms (and their changes in social life and history) underpinning both class inequality and mobility over the long-durée. Firstly, they offer a broad *multigenerational cultural transmission* approach to social mobility, drawing on the key concepts of cultural capital and cultural repertoires. Secondly, this enlarged analytical perspective is better equipped to provide a richer account of intra-class variation and a more granular

attention to the relationship between class origins and destinations. Last, but certainly not least, it can contribute to a better identification of the complex dynamics underpinning mobility trajectories in societies in the mostly under-researched societies of the Global South, and not just those of the Global North. In short, greater cross-fertilisation between the contributions emerging from cultural sociology with the analytical concerns tied to a broad multigenerational perspective can productively reorient research on mobility—one able to address the ‘long shadow’ (Lareau, 2015) of class origins not just over the life-course, but also across multiple generations.¹⁶²

Mobility as a gendered process

Showing the long and multifaceted influence of social class is not the only factor underpinning mobility, however. Throughout this thesis, I have also argued that mobility is a deeply gendered process. In dialogue with a large body of research (e.g., Abbott and Sapsford, 1987; Beller, 2009; Lawler, 1999a; Pasquali, 2014; Skeggs, 1997b; Sorensen, 1994), I have provided *a systematic comparison* between the experiences of men and women sharing similar long-range upward trajectories. This is rarely available in the literature.¹⁶³ Here, again, I draw from the concepts of cultural capital and cultural repertoires to understand gender both across generations and over the life-course.

¹⁶² The broader approach I am trying to outline here can be also expressed in the following terms. It is one that calls for a far greater acknowledgement that humans form values, conventions, and practices, and that the changes in these change the form they experience class inequality and social mobility, and that understanding social life involves necessarily and perhaps largely an understanding of these things as they actually figure in human values and action in and over time. Calculation or strategic motives—which both Goldthorpe (2000) or Bourdieu (1984[1979]; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970) tend to over-emphasise—are shaped and unfold within both specific and wider institutional and cultural forms, but they cannot produce those institutions and cultural forms. Bourdieu was well aware of all this, but all too often his sociology was rendered as a zero-sum game in a never-ending struggle for recognition (cf. Lamont, 1992, Ch. 7).

¹⁶³ Until now, the bulk of the literature has focused either on men (e.g., Ingram, 2009; Reay, 2002) or women (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Lawer, 1999; Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine *et al.*, 2001), but without making systematic comparisons.

Gender has occupied a prominent place in every chapter in this research. The force of gender norms was discernible from both the family past and the early childhood of interviewees. In Chapter 5, for instance, I reported how the commitment to succeed at school among female interviewees was embedded in the gendered expectations transmitted by their families—especially mothers. They, often very conscious of the compounded disadvantages of class and gender their daughters would otherwise face, vaunted upward mobility via education.¹⁶⁴ At the same time, however, this quest was not devoid of other constraining gender norms hampering their upward trajectories. In Chapter 6 I showed how, compared with their male counterparts, female interviewees grew up under much stricter parental controls, usually confining them to a restrictive social space circumscribed solely to school and home (Shahrokni, 2018), which often increased their solitariness and difficulties at school. These findings thus reveal the *double-sided influence of gender norms* on mobility: simultaneously a driver in the search for greater autonomy via education and the constraints that may actually act to inhibit, or make more troublesome, that same pursuit.

These double-sided gender norms continue to shape the experience of female interviewees at elite universities and professions. As I uncovered in Chapter 7 and 8, in the three high-status occupations under study—law, medicine, and engineering—women conveyed specific forms of gender discrimination *and* stigmatisation. The latter, especially in the form of underestimation, stereotyping, or neglect, were particularly significant—incidents which I addressed using the concept of ‘assaults on worth’ (Lamont *et al.*, 2016; more on this below). As a result, first-generation female students in elite professions face a compounded disadvantage: not just the one rooted in their class backgrounds, but also one tied to their

¹⁶⁴ This was often part of a larger quest for autonomy—and the corresponding sense of emancipation—which remains so elusive for women from working-class origins.

gender. These findings echo a consistent body of research indicating that women are most commonly perceived as outsiders in their class of destination (Lawler, 1999; Pasquali, 2014; Skeggs, 1997). But they also highlight—an aspect unacknowledged in existing research—the particular role of gender stigmatisation for mobility analysis.

My findings do not merely reveal the significance of gender stigmatisation, but also show that it *varies* across high-status academic disciplines. In engineering, for instance, I found that ‘being good at maths’ has a powerful gender manifestation. Female students are deprived of one of the few abilities—rooted in the greater value devoted to ‘technical’ over other forms of cultural capital in engineering—allowing male students from similar origins to reduce their class marginality at elite universities. This occurs, I argued, not because of any difference in cultural capital *per se*, but because of the status of its holder. Acknowledging that engineering has been historically constituted as the quintessential male profession means that any particular attempt to leverage that knowledge (‘being good at maths’) in this profession *must* be understood as a gendered process: such knowledge is inseparably linked to its source (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 104 n40; see also Bourdieu 1994). In law, on the other hand, I uncovered how female interviewees experience a particular variant of ‘assaults on worth’ more frequently: that related to the lack of attention or neglect rather than aggression. These experiences of neglect reveal a particular form of class mistreatment that upwardly mobile women face, thus deepening their class marginality in elite environments. They can be understood as reflecting how first-generation female students are ‘bodies out of place’ (Puwar, 2004) in institutional spaces, like law, marked by both power and masculinity.

Upwardly mobile women not only struggle more to adjust to elite universities and professions. They also face compounded, often contradictory, gendered demands from their ties of origin and those of destination. In Chapter 9, I showed how the tensions that upwardly

mobile females experience with their families of origin usually revolve around pressures of motherhood, marriage, and caregiving roles. But these demands exerted by their ties of origin, especially among younger female interviewees, go against the gender norms now prevailing in high-status occupations, where motherhood has been postponed by heightened professional competition. Yet the central normative place of kin ties in Chile and the still pervasive force of the maternal or caregiving roles of women often led female interviewees to assume part-time jobs, accept positions with flexible hours, or leave the labour market to raise children. These gendered entanglements, I argued, not only imply greater professional costs for upwardly mobile women (e.g., diminished earning potential and career prospects) (UNDP, 2010, 2020), but also feed into the class dislocation tied to their upward trajectories (more on this below).

Taken as a whole, these findings contribute to the literature looking directly or indirectly at mobility through the lens of gender. Firstly, rather than research focused either on upwardly mobile men or women, these findings reinforce the need to conduct more studies that make systematic and consistent comparisons between males and females over the life-course. Secondly, as the gender discrimination of upwardly mobile women varies according to specific high-status occupations, this research calls for the development of a more occupationally-specific gendered approach to mobility processes into elite professions. Finally, my findings draw greater analytical attention to the way the pull of gender norms is differently exerted by ties of origin and those of destination.

Class dislocation and the quest to re-find belonging

Another central feature of this research has been how the experience of long-range upward mobility is conditioned by class dislocation. This doctoral dissertation thus touches on a

longstanding sociological debate focusing on the consequences of mobility on individuals. For a long time, this debate has been structured around two opposing hypotheses: the ‘acculturation’ hypothesis, emphasising both the search for identification and the psychologically smooth transitions to the upwardly mobile’s class of destination among (e.g., Blau, 1954; Goldthorpe, 1980; Marshal and Firth, 1999); and the ‘dissociative’ hypothesis, highlighting the disruptive and anomic nature of social mobility, linked to lasting forms of social and psychological distress (e.g., Bourdieu, 2004[2002]; Sorokin, 1981[1927]). Against this entrenched backdrop, Naudet (2011, 2018[2012]) has more recently contended that the possibility of overcoming the dislocation tied to upward mobility is largely dependent on the cultural repertoires available to the upwardly mobile.

Throughout this study, I have argued that in order to better understand the impacts of mobility on individuals we need a more *situated analysis*. Against the predictions of the acculturation hypothesis, my findings—supported by extensive and in-depth qualitative-based research—amply demonstrate the existence of class dislocation among interviewees. They suggest that class dislocation unfolds over time, usually starting upon arrival at elite universities and then intensifying as the upwardly mobile move deeper into adulthood. Nevertheless, my findings also show that, contrary to the link between long-range upward trajectories and the durable dispositional cleavage implied in the Bourdieusian notion of ‘habitus clivé’ (Bourdieu, 2004[2002]), class dislocation, at least in the Chilean context, *varies* considerably.¹⁶⁵ This variation, my findings indicate, is contingent on a number of intervening or mediating factors: the cultural repertoires shaping the class background, gender, school trajectory, geographical origin, and specific occupational settings. Greater dislocation is

¹⁶⁵ In other national contexts, scholars have also noted the lack of a widespread empirical connection between different types of upward mobility (e.g., short-, mid-, long-range) and the manifestation of a ‘habitus clivé’ (see Friedman, 2016; Lahire, 1998: 49; Pasquali, 2014, pp. 404-5).

experienced by those from loyalist stances, women, those studying at ordinary state schools or voucher schools, those rooted in the provinces, and those developing their professional careers in work settings where established elites prevail. Lesser dislocation is experienced by those hailing from legitimist stances, men, those educated at *liceos emblemáticos*, those rooted in the capital, and those who develop their occupations in more socially diverse work settings.

By acknowledging this variability in the experience of long-range upward mobility, my findings contribute to the existing literature on class dislocation in two main respects. Firstly, they suggest that rather than asking whether mobility is overall positive or negative (as those working according to the acculturation and dissociation hypotheses tend to do), it is essential to pay much greater attention to how all the intervening or mediating factors identified above affect the experience of long-range upward mobility and more systematically relate those factors to particular national contexts, occupational pathways, and variations over the life-course. Secondly, in line with Naudet (2011, 2018[2012]), my findings highlight the significance of including *cultural repertoires* in the analysis of class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility. Composed of shared narratives, frames, or scripts, the availability of cultural repertoires can provide an important role in helping the upwardly mobile make sense of their dislocated position in the social space. Cultural repertoires also matter because, unlike much of Bourdieusian sociology, they help to recognise the upwardly mobile's own agency and intentionality (beyond purely strategic motives) when facing the tensions tied to their upward trajectories. They thus offer powerful tools to the upwardly mobile in their quest to re-find meaning and belonging.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Still, however relevant they are, cultural repertoires in themselves cannot offer—as Naudet's approach dares to suggest—the keys to account for processes of inclusion/exclusion at the upper echelons of society: cultural repertoires do not erase the weight of structural inequalities at the top, or the experience of class stigmatisation and discrimination, which also play an important role in interviewees' lack of identification with their class of destination.

However, beyond these general considerations, my findings also suggest the need to draw greater specific attention to how class dislocation unfolds regarding ties of origin and destination. In terms of *ties of origin*, as I revealed in Chapter 7, arriving at elite universities marks the beginning of a separation from the backgrounds of origin of interviewees, in which they cannot find much support or understanding of the challenges they are experiencing through higher education. This dislocation persists, or intensifies, as the upwardly mobile move deeper into their adulthood or professional careers, often contributing to increasing their lack of a sense of belonging. As I showed in Chapter 9, the long-range upwardly mobile experience numerous tensions—revolving around divergent expectations, relationships, and issues of belonging—with the non- or short-range upwardly mobile members of their families, notwithstanding their willingness to remain closely attached to them.

This research contributes to the meagre body of research tackling these issues. My findings confirm that reaching elite universities goes hand in hand with the rise of misunderstandings or frictions between the upwardly mobile and their families of origin (Lee and Kramer, 2013), even if the upwardly mobile often display a galvanised reflexivity (Reay *et al.*, 2009) or implement ‘practical arrangements’ (e.g., providing multiple ‘transfer of capitals’ or remaining close to relatives and friends from their backgrounds of origin) (Pasquali, 2014) in their attempts to lessen the tensions arising from their trajectories. This form of class dislocation is particularly relevant in the Chilean context, where—like in most Latin American nations—individuals are exceedingly dependent on family networks, both emotionally and materially (more on this below).

Going beyond the class of origin, my research extends the empirical knowledge about the dislocating effects of mobility in the *class of destination*. In Chapters 7 and 8, I have shown how

this occurs in the institutional settings shaping elite universities and high-status occupations. Indeed, both at university and work, especially where the established elites prevail, interviewees experience class inequality as a form of discrimination or stigmatisation. Although most of the time they do not themselves experience direct forms of blatant classism, they felt commonly stigmatised because of their class backgrounds in different ways: being misunderstood, ignored, overlooked, underestimated, or stereotyped. Such experiences act as boundary-marking and cumulative incidents: they tend to separate them from the privileged peers or colleagues they encounter in the class of destination.

Surprisingly enough, these experiences of class stigmatisation remain unnoticed or under-theorised in mobility research. Throughout this study, I have imported the concept of ‘assaults on worth’ (Lamont *et al.*, 2016, pp. 28-29), originally applied in studies of ethno-racial exclusion, to address these experiences of class inequality. Unlike ‘symbolic violence’—being compelled to see one’s life and lifestyle through the often degrading lens of the upper classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005[1992])—assaults on worth better grasps the wide range of class mistreatment the upwardly mobile experience in elite settings: being misunderstood, overlooked, underestimated, or stereotyped, as mentioned above. Their high prevalence reveals that issues of recognition are at least as central as being deprived of resources or ‘class pay gaps’ (Friedman and Laurison, 2016, 2019). The notion of assaults on worth can be used to link the dislocating effects of long-range upward mobility with different forms of denied cultural membership and a devalued sense of self-worth—what Lamont (2018) terms ‘recognition gaps’. Both concepts are thus promising conceptual tools to capture the persistent issues of belonging that the long-range upwardly mobile experience in adjusting to their class of destination.

Class trajectory and intimate relations

Another distinctive finding of this research concerns the link between long-range upward mobility and intimate relationships. As I have explored in Chapter 9, my findings suggest that romantic partners who share the class origins of interviewees provide crucial help to stabilise their class dislocation. At the same time, my data indicates that the long-range upwardly mobile also face a sturdy ‘class ceiling’ in the realm of romantic or marital relations (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). While the bulk of them forge intimate relationships with traveling companions—partners sharing a similar upward trajectory—or foreigners, only 3 of them have developed a sustained relationship with a partner or spouse from upper middle-class or upper-class backgrounds. These findings—the stabilising role of romantic partners to face class dislocation and the existence of a ‘class ceiling’ at the top in terms of affective relations—reveal a double-faced phenomenon brought together by the specific trajectory experienced by the long-range upwardly mobile.

My research thus foregrounds the significance of *class trajectory* in the study of social mobility and assortative mating (see also Toft and Jarness, 2020: 21). On the one hand, my findings invite us to shift our analytical focus towards the upper echelons of society in the study of assortative mating processes. If matrimonial alliances have been one of the most effective mechanisms to diversify the ranks of established elites in Chilean society (e.g., Jocelyn-Holt, 2008; Stabili, 1996; Vicuña, 2008[2001]; see Chapter 3), the upwardly mobile continue to face a ‘matrimonial closure’ (Hunneus, 2013) at the top.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, the highly prevalent choice of partners sharing a comparable class origin and trajectory among interviewees, calls

¹⁶⁷ Sebastián Hunneus (2013) argues that this ‘matrimonial closure’, structured around both economic and symbolic preferences, continues to be strongly at work to this day, especially in the economic fraction of the Chilean upper classes.

for greater consideration of the potential role romantic or marital partners play as stabilising agents contributing to face the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility. Once again, this is particularly relevant in Latin American societies, which depend heavily on family networks for both material and emotional support and wellbeing.

These findings challenge existing sociological approaches addressing these issues (e.g., Blau and Duncan, 1967; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Blossfeld, 2009; Glass, 1954; Kalmijn, 1991). Much like Goldthorpe's 'big' occupational approach to class mobility, this stream of research studies assortative mating patterns based on large economic or educational criteria, which fail to grasp both more granular processes of openness or closure at the top and the specific content or modes of partner preferences structuring assortative mating processes.¹⁶⁸ Against this backdrop, my findings suggest that the choice of romantic and/or marital partners among the long-range upwardly mobile is better captured by paying attention to the lasting influence of class over the life-course. This broader perspective draws attention to the dynamic interplay between early and later class conditioning that the upwardly mobile experience throughout their trajectories and how this moulds their choice of romantic or marital partners.

Neoliberalism and the experience of long-range upward mobility

Chilean society is internationally well-known for the implementation of pioneering, systematic, and radical neoliberal reforms since the mid-1970s (Fourcade and Babb, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Ruiz and Boccardo, 2015; Ruiz, 2019). Led by Augusto Pinochet's protracted

¹⁶⁸ As a result, to this date, very little research exists on the empirical association between long-range upward mobility and the formation of intimate relations. Although its relevance has long been recognised (Bourdieu, 1976; Goode, 1959; Mills, 2000), this scholarship has largely overlooked group formation through romantic or marriage relations across class lines (for a notable exception, see Streib, 2013).

dictatorship, the implementation of neoliberal policies during the 1970s and 1980s included macroeconomic stabilisation, deregulation of prices and markets, the privatisation of public enterprises and social services. Chile thus became a paradigmatic example of a society in which the market gained centrality not only as a crucial means of allocating economic resources, but also as an institutional mechanism of social coordination and differentiation. My findings confirm the advent of these vast and deep transformations (see Chapters 5, 6, 8 and 9). Yet they also show that both elite universities and high-status occupations, backed by a power and cultural legitimacy built over the long-durée, remain the central institutional mechanisms shaping class reproduction and trajectories of upward mobility at the upper echelons of Chilean society.

Neoliberal restructuring has not only been confined to large-scale changes in institutional arrangements, but it has impacted Chilean culture and morality as well—a society in which identities and values and expectations are assessed according to people’s individuality, productivity, and meritocratic success (Greenhouse, 2009). In this new cultural framework, values such as self-reliance, hard work, and discipline have attained growing prominence regarding opportunities for upward mobility and work achievements in individualistic terms (ETE, 2008; ELSOC, 2016-2018; Landerretche and Lillo, 2011), although the recognition of structural forces has not entirely faded (Frei *et al.*, 2020). Against this backdrop, my findings suggest a noticeable trend towards self-reliance, socioeconomic success, and competitiveness—the main features of what Lamont *et al.*, (2016) call the ‘neoliberal self’—especially among younger generations (see Chapter 5 and 6).

However, my findings also indicate that for the vast majority of interviewees this broad depiction simply does not capture the complexity of their perception of inequalities and how they make sense of their own exceptional trajectories in the Chilean context. As others have

noted for other societies (e.g., Atkinson, 2010; Terrail, 2010[1990]), my findings show that the ‘neoliberalisation’ of culture, though clearly undermining prior cultural forms, does not remove them entirely. In Chapter 5, I showed how two powerful cultural repertoires pre-existing the neoliberal shift—the enlightened working-class culture and the broad public tradition tied to the *liceos*—are still important frames through which the families of interviewees value education. In Chapter 8, I showed how this cultural inheritance—at least partially—shapes the way interviewees approach, navigate, and try to remain in contact with their backgrounds of origin in the exercise of their high-status occupations. In Chapter 9, I revealed how interviewees devote significant resources, energies, and time to support and remain attached to their families, both nuclear and extended.

These findings thus significantly qualify conventional depictions of social mobility as an individual achievement (Landerretche and Lillo, 2011), or the common view that individualisation is a dominant societal pattern in Chile (e.g., UNDP, 1998, 2002). They suggest, by contrast, how the long-range upwardly mobile often mobilise competing or even contradictory logics when making sense of their lives—including superimposing new cultural models onto older ones (cf. Swidler, 1986). The case of Jorge, the lawyer trained at PUC we met in Chapter 5 and then followed throughout subsequent chapters, is particularly telling in this regard. In Chapter 5, I used Jorge’s narrative, insisting on ‘personal motivation’, ‘seeking opportunities’ and ‘seizing them’, to define the main traits of the neoliberal framework to value education and success in life more broadly. But in Chapter 7 and 9, I also highlighted how Jorge, educated at the still prominent Instituto Nacional, was also embedded in the wider *republican* and *meritocratic* script closely tied to *liceos emblemáticos*, which works as a potent cultural repertoire—both to value education and to position mobility as part of a broader historical narrative beyond a narrow neoliberal script.

This research therefore highlights the need to provide a more granular attention to the role of different cultural repertoires have for social mobility, even in a highly ‘neoliberalised’ society such as Chile. Indeed, my findings suggest that cultural repertoires co-exist, overlap, and adjust to new circumstances in often complex and intricate ways. Following the argument advanced by Méndez and Gayo (2019, Ch. 6), my data thus invite us to address upward mobility into the upper middle class by paying attention not just to prior resource endowments, but also the specific inflections of meritocratic discourses and cultural repertoires. This broader analytical perspective should be able to provide a more fine-grained account of both the commonalities and variations behind trajectories and experiences of upward mobility and how they relate to meritocratic success and values (see also Fercovic, 2020).

Last, but certainly not least, it is relevant to ponder the possible effects of neoliberalism in intensifying the class dislocation tied to long-range upward mobility. Throughout this research, I have recognised the experience of long-range upward mobility of my own grandfather partly to highlight that *his* class dislocation cannot be attributed to the neoliberal transformation. At the same time, I have underlined the role played by cultural and institutional frameworks prior to the neoliberal shift—the enlightened working-class culture or the broad public tradition tied to *liceos*, or educational institutions such as *liceos emblemáticos*—and functioning as scaffolding, buffers, and protection for crossing class boundaries in a highly unequal and segregated society.

Nevertheless, the steep decline of these wider cultural and institutional frameworks and the consolidation of criteria of worth emphasising socioeconomic success, competitiveness, and self-reliance in recent years, might well engender more difficulties for the long-range upwardly mobile in their quest to find a place to belong in Chilean society. As I showed in

Chapter 6, under neoliberalism, particularly regarding education, private strategies are considered morally virtuous, while those who rely on state options tend to hide it under the threat of being dishonoured. In this new cultural landscape, however, interviewees assuming these criteria of worth tend to struggle more both with making sense of the discrimination and stigmatisation they have experienced along the way, and how to (re)find meaning and belonging. This is *not* coincidental. The vocabulary accompanying the ‘neoliberal self’—individual-based self-reliance, socioeconomic success, and competitiveness—does not provide them with the cultural and social resources capable to appease their class dislocation, or make a yearned but highly elusive sense of community more likely.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Dramatis Personae

Table XIV: Protagonists of this research by order and chapter of appearance

Name	Profession	Featuring in Chapter
Ana	Engineer	1,6, and 9
Carmen	Doctor	5, 6, 7, and 9
Loreto	Engineer	5 and 9
Juan	Lawyer	5 and 7
Carlos	Doctor	5 and 8
Jorge	Lawyer	5, 7, 9 and 10
Catalina	Engineer	5 and 6
Diego	Engineer	5 and 8
Héctor	Engineer	6
Paula	Lawyer	6
Marta	Lawyer	6
Ximena	Engineer	6
Fernando	Economist	6, 8 and 9
Antonio	Engineer	6
Alejandra	Lawyer	6
Pedro	Lawyer	7 and 8
María	Doctor	7 and 9
Jaime	Engineer	7
Catherine	Lawyer	7, 8 and 9
Daniel	Lawyer	7
Rodrigo	Engineer	7 and 8
Andrea	Doctor	7, 8 and 9
Sofía	Engineer	7 and 9
Rosa	Lawyer	7, 8 and 9
Carolina	Lawyer	7
Francisca	Engineer	7 and 8
Amparo	Lawyer	8
Pablo	Lawyer	8
Javier	Doctor	8 and 9
Sebastián	Doctor	9

Appendix 2: Informed Consent

The purpose of this information is to help you decide if you wish to participate in this research conducted to obtain a PhD in Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The aim of this doctoral research is to collect in-depth information about the experience of long-range upward social mobility in contemporary Chile, for which it is necessary to conduct a series of interviews with people who have experienced upwardly mobile trajectories.

This is a qualitative research. The main researcher is the sociologist from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and MSc in Geosciences from University of Heidelberg, Malik Fercovic. The supervisors responsible for this research are the sociologists Professor Mike Savage and Dr. Sam Friedman, both renowned academic experts in stratification and social mobility working at LSE.

If you decide to participate in this research, we will carry out an interview of approximately 90 minutes. On this occasion we will address issues that concern the subjective experience associated with the various stages of upward social mobility in Chile. The interviewee will also be asked if they can provide contact information for other potential participants in this study. In case the researcher requires more information, you could be contacted within the next 16 weeks after the first interview, to participate in a second interview.

If you decide to participate in the study, we assure you that all the information collected will be used for the scientific purposes described above, and that any sensitive information (such as residence address, email and natural name) will be kept under strict confidentiality and anonymity. We will earnestly answer any questions you have now or in the future. In addition

to being able to contact the principal investigator of this study, Malik Fercovic (m.fercovic-cerda@lse.ac.uk), you may also contact the supervisors of this doctoral research, Professor Mike Savage (m.a.savage@lse.ac.uk) and Dr. Sam Friedman (s.e.friedman@lse.ac.uk).

I have been informed that this study seeks to obtain important information about the experience of upward social mobility in contemporary Chile. This information will be used only for scientific purposes. I have been asked to give one or two interviews and make contacts for other potential interviewees. I have been informed that this information will be treated with absolute confidentiality and anonymity. I have been explicitly told that, with the exception of the researcher and supervisors of this study, no other person will have access to the information I provide.

In case of any doubt or question, I have been asked to contact the researcher responsible for this study, Malik Fercovic (m.fercovic-cerda@lse.ac.uk), or the supervisors of this doctoral research, Professor Mike Savage (m.a.savage@lse.ac.uk) and Dr. Sam Friedman (s.e.friedman@lse.ac.uk)

_____, _____
Place Date

Signature

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Introductory remarks

This interview will be devoted to your life-story. Our conversation will be about the events, experiences, situations, relations, and decisions that have been important for your upwardly mobile trajectory. Starting from your grandparents and parents, going through your childhood, youth, adulthood, up to the present moment. Your personal identity will remain anonymous, and I will use a pseudonym if I quote anything of what you have shared with me. If any question makes you feel uncomfortable, you can decide not to answer. This is not about good or bad answers, but about expressing what you want to share with me about your life pathway and experience of upward mobility.

Family background/Infancy

- To begin with, I would like to ask you about your family background. Could you tell me about your grandparents and parents? And your home? How many people lived together there? (ask for precise information about the family, the home, the neighbourhood).

Follow up:

- What was the main occupation of your parents? What about your grandparents? Where do/did they live? Did your family have financial difficulties? If so, how?
- During your childhood, did the composition of your home change in any important respect (birth of a sibling, divorce, etc.)?
- What kind of cultural values or activities were appreciated or promoted in your family, both nuclear or extended?

Schooling

- Could you describe to me your educational trajectory and experience from the beginning of schooling to university?

Follow up:

- Did your parents help or support you during school/university? How would you describe their attitude towards the school/university?
- What was your attitude towards school/university? What was your main source of motivation? What pushed you to study?
- Was there any other person (from your own or different social background) that was important for you as a source of motivation and guidance (schoolteacher, relative, neighbour, etc.)?
- Did you experience any form of discrimination or stigmatisation (for instance, ignored, misunderstood, mistreated, excluded, etc.) along the way? If so, how?

Work experience

- Could you describe to me now your occupational/professional experience and trajectory?

Follow up:

- Was it easy or difficult to find a job during or after university? Why?
- Was there any person supporting you to set up your professional career? How?
- Is there any way that your own social background and trajectory has helped you to progress in your career? How?
- Have you faced any barriers in the access to work opportunities? Do you feel integrated in your work?

- How do you approach your own profession? What values or practices matter most for you?

Finding your place between ties of origin and destination

- To conclude, let us consider your experience of upward mobility as a whole.

Follow up:

- What are the most important ties for you (e.g., class of origin, family of origin, friends, colleagues, private life)? Why?
- In which moments/environments do you consider that you can be yourself? In which social environments do you feel valued for what you do and who you are? Why?
- Looking back, what do you think made the difference in your trajectory (compared to others sharing with you a similar class/family background)?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?