Elite universities in Chile: Between social mobility and reproduction of inequality

Maria Luísa Quaresma and Cristóbal Villalobos

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Abstract: The Chilean Higher Education System can be considered an exemplary case of massification based on the privatisation and heterogenisation of universities. These processes have created a dual system, with a large group of universities for mass education versus a small group of universities focused on educating elites. In this context, this paper aims to analyse the ethos and missions of elite universities and programmes, their selection mechanisms, and students' socioeconomic and cultural background. Eight case studies were selected, and different data collection techniques were used: interviews with academics, non-participant observations, students' survey and secondary data analysis. Results show that these elite universities (characterised by overrepresentation of students from the upper and middle-upper classes, high levels of excellence and prestige, and academic selection processes or high fees) respond to their own market niche's needs, differentiating themselves not only from 'mass universities' but also from each other. To achieve this, each elite university has its own vision, set of values and practices. Despite these differences, all the elite universities and programmes seek to face the current tertiary massification scenario by opening up to student social diversity ensuring, however, that these changes do not structurally modify their sociocultural composition or their institutional mission.

Keywords: Chile; elite; universities; reproduction of inequality; social mobility; social diversity; selection mechanisms.

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I. Introduction

Within Latin American countries, Chile can be considered an exemplary case of the massification of higher education.[1] In just over three decades, the country has evidenced a gross tertiary schooling rate increase of 612 percent,[2] reaching, since 2007, what Trow has called the system's universalisation stage, which means a gross enrolment ratio greater than 50%.[3] Compared to other countries in the region, the Chilean education system is quite unusual. Between 1842 (the year when University of Chile (UCH) was founded) and 1970, the higher education system was focused on training the elite and there were only eight universities by the end of the 1960s, none of which charged tuition fees.[4] However, during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1989), the Chilean higher education system experienced a drastic reform. It encouraged a self-financing system in universities, which meant the introduction of tuition fees, and it led to an expansion of the higher educational supply, increasing the role of the market and the private sector in providing, financing, and managing the educational system, raising the cost of higher education for families.[5]

After the fall of Pinochet's regime (1990), Chile's tertiary educational policies focused mainly on two goals: i) enhancing institutional accreditation and accountability standards; ii) promoting equity of access and equality of opportunity for all, particularly for students from vulnerable contexts, using financial aid as policy tool.[6] These goals have been spurred mainly through the implementation of a series of financial support policies (loans and, to a lesser extent, scholarships) for low and middle-class families. While these policies have improved the access to university, they have also raised families' economic indebtedness. Consequently, while private spending on higher

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[1] José Brunner and Francisco Ganga, "Dinámicas de transformación en la educación superior latinoamericana: desafíos para la gobernanza," Opción 32, no. 80 (2016): 12-35.

[2] José Salazar and Peodair Leihy, "El largo viaje: Los esquemas de coordinación de la educación superior chilena en perspectiva," Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas 25, no. 4 (2017): 120-142.

[3] Martin Trow, "The Expansion and Transformation of Higher Education," International Review of Education 18, no.1 (1972): 61-84.

[4] José Brunner, "Medio siglo de transformaciones de la educación superior chilena: un estado del arte," in La Educación Superior de Chile: transformación, desarrollo y crisis, ed. Andrés Bernasconi (Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2015), 21-107.

[5] Oscar Espinoza and Luis González, "Equidad en la educación superior de Chile: acceso, permanencia, desempeño y resultados," in La Educación Superior de Chile. Transformación, desarrollo y crisis, ed. Andrés Bernasconi (Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2015), 517-580.

[6] José Brunner, "Educación superior en Chile: instituciones, mercados y políticas gubernamentales, 1967-2007" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2008).

education in Chile in 2010 reached 1.7 percent of GDP, in Argentina it was at 0.4 percent and in Brazil it was at 0.3 percent.[7]

These changes in the higher education system have generated four main waves of student protests after the return of democracy, with peaks in 1997, 2006, 2011 and, more recently, in 2019. The latter protests led to a referendum on developing a new Constitution to replace the one left by the Pinochet regime.[8] In all the cases, students criticised the commodification of education and protested the expensive tuition fees and high student debts, demanding free and high-quality education.[9] To respond to the students' demands, a set of targeted reforms were promoted, including a decrease in study loan interest rates, more intensive supervision of private universities and, under Bachelet's centre-left government (between 2014 and 2018), the regulation of tuition prices and the approval of a free-tuition law addressed to low-income families.[10] Currently, this policy is focused on students from families that belong to the lowest 60% of households in terms of income, and applies only to a limited subset of institutions, benefiting just over 20% of total enrolment in higher education.[11]

In sum, the massification of the tertiary system, the growth of higher education institutions, and the expansion of educational costs for families are the key characteristics of the Chilean post-dictatorship higher education system. From the perspective of social mobility and reproduction of inequality, these processes create a paradox. On the one hand, the opportunities for entry into the tertiary system have increased for the low and middle socioeconomic groups, reducing the access gap between social classes.[12] On the other hand, access to universities became increasingly differentiated

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[7] Espinoza and González, "Equidad en la educación superior de Chile: acceso, permanencia, desempeño y resultados".

[8] Villalobos, Cristóbal, and Camila Ortiz, "Continuidades y rupturas de la protesta universitaria en el Chile postdictadura (1990-2014)," Temas Sociológicos 24, no.1: 89-120.

[9] Jason Delisle and Andrés Bernasconi, "Lessons from Chile's Transition to Free College," Evidence Speaks Reports, 2, no.43 (2018): 1-14.

[10] Maria Verónica Santelices, Ximena Catalán, and Catherine Horn, "Chile's higher education system: Structure and policies behind increased enrrollment," in The Quest for Equity in Chile's Higher Education: Decades of Continued Efforts, ed. Maria Verónica Santelices, Catherine Horn, and Ximena Catalán (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 9-27.

[11] Andrés Bernasconi, "Chile: "The challenges of free college," in International perspective in Higher Education. Balancing access, equity and cost, ed. Jason Desdile and Alex Ushler (Cambridge: Harvard Educational Press, 20019), 109-128.

[12] Espinoza and González, "Equidad en la educación superior de Chile: acceso, permanencia, desempeño y resultados"; Javier Nuñez and Leslie Miranda, "Intergenerational income and educational mobility in urban Chile," Estudios de Economía, 38, no.1 (2011): 195-221.

between two types of institutions: universities whose aim is to educate the masses and a small group of universities focused on the elites' education.[13] So, the Chilean higher education system creates both opportunities and barriers, constituting a case of what Merle has called 'segregated democratisation'.[14] Therefore, several researchers have questioned whether Chilean higher education is effectively contributing to social mobility or, on the contrary, is reproducing social inequalities.[15]

The focus of previous related studies has been mixed. In some cases, the emphasis has been placed on understanding the changes in the distribution of access according to the type of university and student socioeconomic background. Other research, exploring the inequality of educational opportunities in the transition from secondary to tertiary education, concluded that 'less advantaged families have scarce opportunities to access to higher education', mainly enrolling in vocational colleges over universities.[16] Indeed, Chile is one of the OECD countries with the highest levels of school segregation, not only at university but also at primary and secondary levels. The Chilean market-orientated educational system, inspired by the economic neoliberalism implemented during Pinochet's dictatorship in the 1980s, has been pinpointed in the literature as the main factor responsible for the high levels of school segregation, from primary schooling onwards. So, the voucher system implementation, the waves of privatisation, the administration of schools by local municipalities rather than the State, and the student selection mechanisms, such as interviews with students and parents or the application of ability tests, have been identified as key features of this highly unequal school system. These negative consequences are intensified by the high levels of residential segregation that exist in Chile, especially in

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[13] Andrés Bernasconi and Sergio Celis, "Higher education reforms: Latin America in comparative perspective," Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas 25, no.67 (2017): 1-12; Danilo Kuzmanic, Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Cristóbal Villalobos, and María Luisa Quaresma, "Socioeconomic Segregation in Higher Education. Evidence from Chile (2009-2017)," Higher Education Policy (2021), https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-021-00258-6.

[14] Pierre Merle, "Democratization or Increase in Educational Inequality? Changes in the Length of Studies in France, 1988-1998," Population 5, no.74-5 (2002): 631-657.

[15] Bernasconi, "Chile: The challenges of free college"; Villalobos, Cristóbal, Ernesto Treviño, Ignacio Wyman, and Judith Scheele. "Social justice debate and college access in Latin America. Merit or need? The role of educational institutions and state in broadening access to Higher Education in the Region," Education Policy Analysis Archives 25, no.73 (2017): 1-26.

[16] Alejandro Sevilla, "Disentangling inequality of educational opportunities: The transition to higher education in Chile" (Phd. Diss. University of Manchester, 2017), 160; Kuzmanic, Danilo, Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Cristóbal Villalobos, and María Luisa Quaresma (2021).

Santiago.[17] In other studies, the focus has been on financial mechanisms and public policy reforms -such as free tuition and their positive impact on student access, and graduation or on the relation between intergenerational income and educational mobility. These studies found low levels of social mobility, even in those cases where young people reached higher levels of education than their parents.[18] Finally, other researchers have put their attention on university access mechanisms and inclusive access programmes, such as loans, scholarships, free tuition and Propaedeutic Programmes implemented over the past decade to promote inclusive access to university.[19]

However, until now, few studies have reflected on the tension between social mobility and social reproduction, taking into account the duality between a large group of universities for mass education versus a small group of universities focused on educating elites.[20] In this paper, the analysis will be focused on this topic, looking at elite universities as a unique place to analyse the dynamics of equity, mobility, and social reproduction in Chile. We aim to analyse the role that elite universities play in the transformation processes of the country's social structure, investigating the institutional, cultural, and social dynamics developed in these institutions. To this end, we explore: i) the characteristics, educational missions and ethos of elite universities in Chile, following not only the Kuh's classical ethos definition of 'a belief system widely shared by faculty, students, administrators, and others',[21] but also its definition as 'core values of the school and to that which is deep and fundamental in its life and work';[22] ii) the student selection mechanisms and notions of equity that are applied by these institutions and; iii) the students' socioeconomic and cultural background in different institutions.

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[17] Claudio Allende, Rocío Diaz, and Juan Pablo Valenzuela, "School segregation in Chile,"; Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance, ed. Ali Farazmand (Berlin: Springer, 2018), 1-10.

[18] Nuñez and Miranda, "Intergenerational income and educational mobility in urban Chile".

[19] Villalobos, et al., "Social justice debate and college access in Latin America. Merit or need? The role of educational institutions and state in broadening access to Higher Education in the Region"; Maria Verónica Santelices, Ximena Catalán, and Catherine Horn, Equidad en la educación superior. Diseño y resultados de programas de acceso en universidades selectivas (Santiago: Ediciones UC, 2018)

[20] Villalobos, Cristóbal, Maria Luísa Quaresma, and Gonzalo Franetovic, "Mapeando a la élite en el espacio universitario. Un análisis cuantitativo-multidimensional del caso chileno," Revista Española de Sociología 29, no. 3 (2020): 523-541.

[21] George Kuh. "Ethos: Its Influence on Student Learning", Liberal Education 79, no 4 (1993): 22-31.22.

[22] Terence Mclaughlin, "The educational importance of ethos", British journal of educational studies 53, no. 3 (2005): 306-325, 310.

The paper is divided into four sections, in addition to this introduction. The second section describes the study's conceptual framework, particularly the tension between social mobility and inequality in higher education, as well as the main characteristics of elite universities. The third section explains the methodology of the study, the case study selection, sources of information and analytical approaches used. The fourth section presents the results, organized in three subsections corresponding to the three main objectives described above. Finally, the last section develops some conclusions and reflections in light of the results presented.

II. Theoretical framework

II.1. *Universities, mobility, and social reproduction*

University massification is one of the most relevant developments in educational systems of recent decades.[23] Confirming Trow's predictions, many higher education systems have gone from elite systems to mass systems and, in some cases, to universal access systems. This process has been followed by important changes in the function and logic of higher education systems, at least in three aspects. First, the meaning of the university diploma or degree has changed. In a context of massification, the university degree is no longer only considered as a technique or knowledge credential attached to a certain profession. Now it assumes a symbolic meaning, fundamentally in competitive universities, as a credential of social prestige and of superior personal qualities that facilitate finding employment in an increasingly demanding labour market in soft skills.[24] Secondly, although massification tends to reduce access gaps between socioeconomic groups, educational opportunities in the university field remain unevenly distributed. Hence, working-class students continue to represent a small part of the student population, mostly accessing low-status universities, while upper and middle classes keep on ruling the higher education field.[25] In Chile, for example, while 79 percent of the highest socioeconomic

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[23] Ann-Marie Bathmaker, Nicola Ingram, Jessica Abrahams, Anthony Hoare, Richard Waller, and Harriet Bradley, Higher Education, Social Class and Social Mobility. The Degree Generation (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2016).

[24] Phillip Brown, Sally Power, Gerbrand Tholen, and Annabelle Allouch, "Credentials, talent and cultural capital: a comparative study of educational elites in England and France," British Journal of Sociology of Education 37, no.2 (2016): 191-211.

[25] Claire Crawford, Paul Gregg, Lindsey Macmillan, Anna Vignoles, and Gill Wyness, "Higher education, career opportunities, and intergenerational inequality," Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 32, no.4 (2016): 553-575; Diane Reay, Miriam David, and Stephen Ball

quintile students attend selective universities -i.e., institutions with low student acceptance rates-, this percentage decreases to 58% for the poorest quintile.[26] Finally, massification has increased the heterogeneity between institutions and areas of study. Elites tend to be overrepresented in certain universities or programmes. For example, universities like Cambridge and programmes such as Medicine and Economics provide better lifetime earnings perspectives for their students than other institutions and programme paths.[27] Something similar happens in the Chilean case, where programmes such as Medicine, Law or Engineering guarantee a greater economic and social return than Education or Arts, and where degrees in Economics, Engineering or Law from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC) or the Universidad de Chile (UCH) qualify for careers with the highest salaries within these areas of study.[28]

Taking all this into consideration, how can we understand the role of universities in social mobility and social reproduction today? The academic literature highlights three aspects. Firstly, the processes of massification and universalisation of higher education have generated a differentiation of the objectives of university studies related to the students' social background. So, the answer to why, where or what to study seems to vary strongly according to the social of students, generating differentiated expectations, discourses, and opportunities according to social class. For the lower classes, access to university tends to be seen as an opportunity for upward social mobility.[29] In contrast, for the middle classes, higher education is understood as a protection against the threat of downward social mobility for their children.[30] Finally, for the upper classes, attending university is understood as a process of validation of their privileges, strongly supported by meritocratic discourses - and as a 'natural' path of personal development.[31]

"Making a Difference? Institutional Habitus and Higher Education Choice," Sociological Research Online 5, no.4 (2018).

[26] Maria Verónica Santelices, et al, Equidad en la educación superior.

[27] Jack Britton, Lorraine Dearden, Neil Shephard, and Anna Vignoles, "How English domiciled graduate earnings vary with gender, institution attended, subject and socio-economic background," IFS Working Papers, no.W16/06 (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2016).

[28] Seth Zimmerman, "Elite Colleges and Upward Mobility to Top Jobs and Top Incomes," American Economic Review 109, no.1 (2019): 1-47.

[29] Diane Reay, "Working class educational transitions to university: the limits of success," European Journal of Education 53, no.4 (2018): 528-540.

[30] Annette Lareau, Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[31] Shamus Khan, Privilege: The making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Quaresma, Maria Luísa, Entre o herdado, o

Secondly, and to respond to the pressure for universities' democratisation, many prestigious universities have implemented several initiatives for facilitating social openness.[32] Concerning the initiatives favouring wider access of lower class students, there is an undeniably fundamental discussion of whether admission should be primarily on the basis of past achievements or also take account of future potential, which would be important but much more difficult to assess. Most elite university initiatives are limited to a specific group of poor students: those with high 'talent' or 'effort'. Using the meritocratic ideology[33] as a mantra, universities have encouraged the 'brightest of the bright' recruitment[34] within disadvantaged groups, promoting competition, innate abilities, and selection. Therefore, these university policies have contributed, although timidly, to decreasing the traditional socioeconomic and cultural homogeneity of these educational spaces as well as to providing some opportunities for the educational mobility of a small number of 'deserving' disadvantaged students.[35] Moreover, popular class inclusion has been carried out overall without transforming the institution`s culture, ethos and policies or processes of teaching-learning. It means that most of these students –or 'strangers in paradise'-[36] are confronted with difficulties that culminate, for many, with abandonment. These students tend to face the dilemma of having a 'habitus divided against itself',[37] and so they need 'superhuman levels of motivation, resilience, and determination, sometimes at the cost of peer group approval' to successfully complete their degrees in these institutions.[38]

Finally, although a university degree is considered a gain for students from a working-class background in terms of prospects for a professional

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vivido e o projetado. Estudo de caso sobre o sucesso educativo em dois colégios privados frequentados pelas classes dominantes (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2014).

[32] Agnès Van Zanten, "L'ouverture sociale des grandes écoles: diversification des élites ou renouveau des politiques publiques d'éducation?, " Sociétés Contemporaines 78 (2010): 69-96.

[33] Khan, Privilege: The making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School

[34] Diane Reay, Gill Crozier, and John Calyton, ''Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class Students in Elite Universities'," Sociology 43, no.6 (2009): 1103–1121

[35] Agnès Van Zanten, "Educating elites. The changing dynamics and meanings of privilege and power", in Elites, privilege and excellence. The national and global redefinition of educational advantage, ed. Agnes Van Zanten, Stephen Ball, and Bernardette Darchy-Koechlin (New York: Routledge, 2015), 6.

[36] Reay et al., "'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class Students in Elite Universities", 1104.

[37] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Contradictions of Inheritance", in Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society, ed. Pierre Bourdieu (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 511.

[38] Reay et al., "'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class Students in Elite Universities", 1115.

career, the labour market has designed a series of non-educational signifiers to be able to 'distinguish suitable from non-suitable candidates',[39] even if they have the same university credentials. By these means, many students from modest backgrounds who have studied at university (especially in elite institutions) are disadvantaged when they enter the labour market, compared to their wealthier colleagues, whose economic, social, cultural and relational capitals make all the difference in access to top positions in the social structure.[40] As Zimmerman points out, these elite university 'outsiders' tend to receive income levels near the top of the distribution, but not at the top.[41] Additionally, these 'fish out of water' or 'outsiders, inside' experience discrimination and even social marginalisation by the 'legitimate insiders'.[42] Despite having the same university education, students from non-elite backgrounds lack other forms of capital and networks that are relevant in labour markets.[43] In Chile, research has shown the existence of non-educational barriers, such as networks and surnames, in access to the labour market.[44]

II.2. *Elite universities: A characterisation*

Based on academic literature, it can be said that elite universities share three main features. First, they generate the lowest student acceptance rates[45] by applying diverse criteria, such as 'academic potential' or the 'individual talents or interests and accomplishments'.[46] These selection

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[39] Gerbrand Tholen, Phillip Brown, Sally Power, and Annabelle Allouch, "The role of networks and connections in educational elites' labour market entrance", Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 34 (2013): 144.

[40] Britton et al., "How English domiciled graduate earnings vary with gender, institution attended, subject and socio-economic background".

[41] Zimmerman, "Elite Colleges and Upward Mobility to Top Jobs and Top Incomes", 33.

[42] Reay et al., "'Strangers in Paradise'? Working-class Students in Elite Universities", 1104; Reay, "Working class educational transitions to university: the limits of success".

[43] Louise Ashley and Laura Empson, "Differentiation and discrimination: Understanding social class and social exclusion in leading," Human Relations 66 (2013): 219-244.

[44] Nuñez and Miranda, "Intergenerational income and educational mobility in urban Chile".

[45] Aline Courtois, "The global ambitions of Irish universities: Internationalizing practices and emerging stratification in the Irish higher education sector," in Universities and the production of elites. Discourses, policies, and strategies of excellence and stratification in higher education, ed. Roland Bloch, Alexander Mitterle, Catherine Paradeise, and Tobias Peter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 127-148.

[46] Jonathan Friedman, "Producing a global elite? The endurance of the national in elite American and British universities", in Universities and the production of elites. Discourses,

processes generate strong access barriers, which act as filters for excluding candidates without the appropriate profile. This creates an enclave of 'the best and the brightest' that enhances, through a process of 'mirroring and reflecting', the perception that teaching at these universities is more prestigious than at others.[47] The mechanisms used are multiple: rigorous admission exams, high point scores in the final examinations in secondary schools, high tuition fees, strict numerus clausus, and recommendation letters and/or selective interviews all limit the access of a large groups of the population, reducing it to a small number of 'chosen'.[48]

Academic, economic, and social barriers lead to another common elite university feature: the overrepresentation of students from higher social classes,[49] usually coming from the most selective and prestigious (typically private) secondary schools. This is why elite universities tend to have such high economic, social, cultural, academic and dispositional homogeneity within their student body, facilitating the construction of a common collective identity.[50] The fact that some prestigious elite universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge, have a lower teacher-student ratio than other institutions (including other Russell Group ones) can reinforce the students' feeling of belongingness to their university.[51] The elites' identity is also analysed by Mension-Rigau, who points out that there are some elite-specific features such as an individual ethic of work, effort, discipline, and excellence but also social commitment, namely through public service that

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policies, and strategies of excellence and stratification in higher education, ed. Roland Bloch, Alexander Mitterle, Catherine Paradeise, and Tobias Peter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 332.

[47] Mats Alvesson and Maxine Robertson, "The Best and the Brightest: The Construction, Significance and Effects of Elite Identities in Consulting Firms," Organization 13, no.2 (2006): 195-224.

[48] Friedman, "Producing a global elite? The endurance of the national in elite American and British universities"; Bathmaker, et al, Higher Education, Social Class and Social Mobility; Brown, et al., "Credentials, talent and cultural capital: a comparative study of educational elites in England and France"; Courtois, "The global ambitions of Irish universities: Internationalizing practices and emerging stratification in the Irish higher education sector"; Van Zanten, "L'ouverture sociale des grandes écoles: diversification des élites ou renouveau des politiques publiques d'éducation?"; Jerome Karabel, The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).

[49] Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Les héritiers (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1964).

[50] Bourdieu and Passeron, Les héritiers: Courtois, "The global ambitions of Irish universities: Internationalizing practices and emerging stratification in the Irish higher education sector".

[51] Charlotte Freitag and Nick Hillman, How different is Oxbridge? (Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute, 2018).

allows them to feel less guilty about their privileged status.[52] The construction of this collective identity begins at home and is reinforced by elite educational institutions. Elite schools and elite universities promote the internalisation of a strong sense of entitlement[53] to occupy positions of power and responsibility and to understand the meaning of certain jobs as prestigious.[54]

A third feature shared by these universities is that they facilitate and, in many cases, guarantee their students' access to political, social, and/or economic positions of power.[55] In Chile, graduates from top universities hold a large proportion of leadership positions in large companies. In the United States, a recent book showed how companies use the institutional prestige of these universities as a filter for choosing the best job candidates.[56] In France, obtaining a qualification from one of the Grandes Écoles is a privileged way to access top-level scientific, political, and administrative positions, as well as leadership positions in the largest economic groups. In 2005, 100 of groups recruited 62 percent of their leaders from this set of graduates.[57] However, as also happens in Chile, there are important differences between courses: a scientific course at École Normale Supérieure gives more prestigious professional opportunities than one in humanities at the same institution. So, graduates from Maths, Physics or Biology are those who most often access top teaching and research positions, compared to graduates from humanities.[58] In the eighties, Baudelot, Raux, Ritz, and Vinh also concluded that there were differences between courses in the same institution (École Normale Supérieure), including courses within the same field of knowledge: for instance, it was easier to reach a prestigious

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[52] Éric Mension-Rigau, Aristocrates et grands bourgeois (Perrin: Éditions Plon, 2007).

[53] Lareau, Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life, 8.

[54] Amy Binder, Daniel Davis, and Nick Bloom, "Career Funneling: How elite students learn to define and desire "prestigious" jobs'," Sociology of Education 89, no.1 (2016): 35.

[55] Alfredo Joignant, "Tecnócratas, technopols y dirigentes de partido: tipos de agentes y especies de capital en las elites gubernamentales de la Concertación (1990-2010)," in Notables, tecnócratas y mandarines. Elementos de Sociología de las élites en Chile (1990-2010), ed. Alfredo Joignant and Pedro Guell (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2011), 49-76; Zimmerman, "Elite Colleges and Upward Mobility to Top Jobs and Top Incomes".

[56] Lauren Rivera, Pedigree. How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[57] Joel Massol, Thomas Vallée, and Thomas Koch, "Lés élites économiques sont-elles encore si différentes en France et en Allemagne?," Regards sur l'économie Allemande 97 (2010): 5-14.

[58] Pierre Bataille, "Intégrer une Ecole normale supérieure… et après?," Formation Emploi, Revue française de sciences sociales, 129 (2015): 65-86.

position of university professor having graduated in Classical Languages than in Philosophy.[59]

Besides these core characteristics, recent research has shown other features of contemporary elite universities, which are facing increasingly global competition. In the first place, the quality and reputation of teaching staff have been identified as a critical factor for competing in the international arena, which prompts these universities to recruit 'star staff', attracting acknowledged senior international professors[60] or 'research superstars'.[61] In Chile, and according to Brunner's[62] and Muñoz and Blanco's[63] typologies, the oldest and most prestigious elite higher education institutions (founded before 1981) are the main Chilean research universities, which also are recognised for their high standards of academic quality, measured by National Accreditation Commission. Their academics are the authors of more than a half of Chilean research papers and are responsible for most research projects supported by National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (FONDECYT).

To attract the best academics, elite universities use several strategies. Some of them adopt a dual salary system for domestic and international professors; others make secret salary negotiations or buy professors with time, i.e., allow certain international professors to concentrate their classes in condensed periods of time to avoid their permanent relocation.[64] Elite universities have also promoted specific advertising strategies to attract elites from around the world. Nespor analyses the visibility strategies used by universities, essentially through websites, showing that these institutions project abroad an institutional imagery of success and prestige.[65] As Nespor

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[59] Christian Baudelot, Hélène Raux, Olivier Ritz, and Josianna Vinh , "Que deviennent les normaliens à la sortie de l'école ?," Bulletin de l'Association des Anciennes Elèves de l'ENS, Supplément historique (2005).

[60] Tupac Soulas, "Grasping the global with one foot in China: The rise of Chinese schools of management", in Universities and the production of elites. Discourses, policies, and strategies of excellence and stratification in higher education, ed. Roland Bloch, Alexander Mitterle, Catherine Paradeise, and Tobias Peter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 227-249.

[61] Sydney Freeman, Jr. and David DiRamio, "Elitism or Pragmatism? Faculty Hiring at Top Graduate Programs in Higher Education Administration", Journal of the Professoriate 8, no.2 (2016): 94-127.

[62] Brunner, José, "Tipología y características de las universidades chilenas", Working paper, 2009, retrieved from http://200.6.99.248/~bru487cl/files/2009/02/post_116.html.

[63] Miguel Muñoz and Christian Blanco, "Una taxonomía de las universidades chilenas," Calidad en la Educación 38 (2013): 181-213.

[64] Soulas, "Grasping the global with one foot in China: The rise of Chinese schools of management".

[65] Jan Nespor, "Elite business schools and the uses of visibility," in Universities and the production of elites. Discourses, policies, and strategies of excellence and stratification in

points out, universities instruct '(...) the viewer to understand the effects of schools on their students', who learn to 'to see themselves as members of a community composed of 'incredible' and 'talented' individuals of cohorts defined by their uniqueness'.[66]

This set of particularities makes elite universities a critical space for the study of social inequality. Firstly, the overrepresentation of students from groups of high socioeconomic status and the high financial return of diplomas mean that elite universities are particularly perceived as institutions where education can play a role in social reproduction processes.[67] Secondly, economic, political, and social elites need to formalise their position by attaining university credentials as a way of validating their future position and justifying their privilege through the meritocratic speech.[68] This formalisation mostly occurs in elite universities, which are incubators of the country's future elites.

III. Methods

III.1. Sample

In our research, we studied eight cases that we understood as paradigmatic examples of elite university programmes taught at prestigious universities in Chile. Several criteria were established for the selection of chosen programmes and universities.[69] For the programmes, we selected six that are included in the three main groups where elites tend to study: i) programmes whose graduates tend to have high levels of economic capital and high social recognition, such as Civil Engineering and Medicine;[70] ii) programmes with

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higher education, ed. Roland Bloch, Alexander Mitterle, Catherine Paradeise, and Tobias Peter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 251-270; Ronald Barthes, "The rhetoric of the image," in Visual rethoric in a digital world: a critical sourcebook, ed. Carolyn Handa (Boston: Bedford St Martin's, 2004), 152-163.

[66] Nespor, "Elite business schools and the uses of visibility".

[67] Pierre Bourdieu, La noblesse d'Etat. Grandes écoles et esprit de corps (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1989).

[68] Étienne Gérard and Anne-Catherine Wagner, "Introduction: Élites au Nord, élites au Sud: des savoirs en concurrence", Cahiers de la recherche sur l'éducation et les savoirs, 14 (2015): 7-24.

[69] We have decided to use the real names of programmes and universities for two reasons. First, we believe that the unique and paradigmatic characteristics of the cases make it difficult to hide the source. Second, the cases constitute unique institutional realities, which can be understood only through their particular history, mission, and vision. Notwithstanding, the anonymity of the actors within each institution has been duly protected.

[70] Patricio Meller, Carreras universitarias: rentabilidad, selectividad, discriminación (Santiago: CIAE / Uqbar Editores, 2010).

Table 1

Characteristics of the selected cases

N	University				Programmes			
	Name	Accredi-tation (years)	Type of University	Institutional Religiosity	Study programme	OCDE Area	USD Annual Cost*	Students from private secondary schools
1	Pontifical Catholic University	7	Private	Catholic	Drama	Arts and Humanities	4.871	58.3%
2	Pontifical Catholic University	7	Private	Catholic	Civil Engineering	Engineering, Construction and Industry	7.705	75.6%
3	University of Chile	7	Public	Secular	Law	Social Sciences	5.450	45.3%
4	University of Chile	7	Public	Secular	Business**	Business and administration	6.378	63.2%
5	University of Santiago	6	Public	Secular	Medicine	Health	6.236	32.3%
6	University of Los Andes	5	Private	Catholic	Medicine	Health	9.231	92.5%
7	University of Los Andes	5	Private	Catholic	Literature	Arts and Humanities	4.531	90.1%
8	University Adolfo Ibáñez	5	Private	Secular	Business**	Business and Administration	7.386	90.9%

Source: Own elaboration based on Higher Education Information System data.

Notes: *=US$ calculated based on an estimate of November, 2020 (1USD$ = 797 CLP); ** includes the programmes of Economics and Business Administration.

high rates of graduates with greater political and economic power in the country, including Economics and Law;[71] and iii) Arts and Humanities (Literature and Drama) programmes preferred by a segment of the children of the elite.[72] For the universities, five institutions were selected for the research. Chile's two historical universities were chosen: UCH, public, and PUC, private, which have both been in operation for over 100 years, are considered of high academic quality and have an overrepresentation of students from the upper and upper-middle classes. A second public university, Universidad de Santiago (USACH), was also selected. It is nationally known for its academic quality, but it is less elitist than the first two institutions. In addition to elite students, it also attracts students from middle and lower-middle classes who can experience upward social mobility after graduating. Finally, two private universities, in operation for only a few decades, were included (Universidad Adolfo Ibañez, UAI and Universidad de los Andes, UANDES), which are characterised by receiving mainly students from selective private schools and high socioeconomic sectors, being named by Muñoz and Blanco as 'highly elitist' universities.[73] Despite the differences, all cases share the three main characteristics identified in the literature to define elite universities:[74] i) having an overrepresentation of students from the upper and middle-upper class; ii) exhibiting high levels of excellence and academic prestige; and iii) establishing high entry barriers, either through academic selectivity processes or high fees. Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the eight case studies.[75]

III.2. Data collection strategies

To analyse the cases, four techniques were used: i) analysis of secondary data and institutional documents; ii) semi-structured interviews (N=48) with institutional actors (academic deans and teachers); iii) non-participant

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[71] Joignant, "Tecnócratas, technopols y dirigentes de partido: tipos de agentes y especies de capital en las elites gubernamentales de la Concertación (1990-2010)".

[72] Bourdieu and Passeron, Les héritiers.

[73] Muñoz and Blanco, "Una taxonomía de las universidades chilenas".

[74] Bourdieu, La noblesse d'Etat; Khan, Privilege: The making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School.

[75] In Chile, the academic quality of universities is assessed through an accreditation process. The accreditation period varies between 1 and 7 years. Regarding costs, each institution can freely establish the annual cost of its programmes (average cost to all programmes is 2,740 USD per year). Finally, private non-subsidised schools (which represent 8% of school enrolment) concentrate the upper-class students of the country.

observations (N=64) of daily spaces and official ceremonies; and iv) student surveys from different programme areas and universities (N=2.340).

For the analysis of secondary data, we used available information from 2017 provided by Chilean Department of Education (DEMRE) and its Employability and Income database. These sources provided us information about social, academic and economic characteristics of students before they enter the programmes and about their income and employability rates four years after graduating. Additionally, information about the mission, vision and main objectives of the programmes and universities was collected through the institutions' websites.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key institutional actors in each case, seeking to analyse their values, and perceptions.[76] The interviews included deans and faculty members and addressed topics such as the institution's history, vision and mission, the cultural and socioeconomic origin of their students, and the role played by concepts such as excellence, equity and merit in their institutional values.

Another technique used was non-participant observation. Overall, 64 observations were made. These observations were used to study social spaces and interactions, keeping minimal participation and observer anonymity, and each one took approximately one hour. These observations were developed in two areas: i) daily spaces, such as transit places, institutional buildings or food areas, and ii) institutional ceremonies, such as start of the year, graduations, celebrations, ending year ceremonies.[77] Each observation was systematised through field notes, which were subsequently classified in files. The fields of observation included how students appropriate the space, the dynamics of the meeting, the existing norms, speeches and control measures, the relations between the different actors, and distinctions in clothing or physical appearance.

Finally, a face-to-face survey was carried out on a sample of students from the selected programmes. The survey was conducted between March and September 2018. In two cases, student enrolment was low (PUC Drama and UANDES Literature), so it was decided to apply the survey to all students. In the other cases, two classes were randomly selected from each year. Besides incorporating information that characterised the students' sociodemographic aspects, information on their family and school socialisation were also requested, as well as asking about the reasons for

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[76] Uwe Flick, An Introduction to qualitative research (London: Sage Publications, 2014).

[77] Rosana Guber, "La etnografía. Método, campo y reflexividad", Revista de Antropología Social, 21 (2012): 304-306.

entering university and choosing their programme, their perceptions about the university and their experience as students, their future life projects, their concepts of excellence, merit, inequality and poverty and, finally, their individual tastes, cultural practices, and friendships.

III.3. Data analysis

The comparative case method was used to analyse the information collected. This methodology involves the analysis and synthesis of the similarities and differences between two or more cases that share a common focus or goal. The main purpose of this method is to understand how the different observed units respond to particular structures, contexts, motivations, and logics compared to other units.[78] In our case, and following the objective of the paper, the comparative method was used to contrast how different elite programmes and universities have been able to put into action social mobility and social reproduction processes through specific discourses, actions, and mechanisms, seeking to understand patterns of similarities and differences between them.[79]

The comparative analysis was carried out in two stages, following the recommendation of Stake.[80] During the first stage, each source of information (secondary data, interviews, observations, and surveys) was analysed separately. Subsequently, in the second stage, the data was analysed all together, which allowed to deepen and clarify the results found in the first phase, through a triangulation process.

IV. Results

IV.1. Institutional characteristics and educational missions of elite institutions

As mentioned before, the selected cases are homogeneous compared to non-elitist universities, but they present internal heterogeneity among each other. Understanding these differences is important, because the heterogeneous ethos of universities shapes different institutional visions about social problems and their role in the country's development. Additionally, these

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[78] Hans Schuetze and Maria Slowey, "Participation and exclusion: A comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in higher education", Higher Education, 44 (2002): 309–327.

[79] Flick, An Introduction to qualitative research.

[80] Robert Stake, The art of case study research (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

different social and ethical values are transmitted to students with equal emphasis than the academic content, shaping heterogeneous elites' profiles. In sum, knowing the elite universities' ethos allows us to better understand their heterogeneity and their educational and social roles, namely those related to mobility and social reproduction processes.[81]

Chilean elite universities present several differences related to their mission and main values and principles and so their education process varies between two poles. On the one hand, in some universities, education is based on the idea of training to participate in social and political life, with an emphasis on the role that students can play in the future of the country. On the other hand, in other universities, education is based on an individual holistic development, focused on developing cognitive and personal skills that will allow students to achieve dominant positions in a specific social field (economic, political, social, etc.), without a particular concern about the transformation of society. Both of these dimensions are part of the elites' educational project.[82]

The educational goal of preparing for social and political commitment is predominant in all the programmes of the historical universities (PUC, UCH, and USACH), although it is especially strong in the last two institutions. The University of Chile is an institution whose aim is 'to teach, research, create and develop sciences, humanities, arts, and techniques to serve the country' (UCH website). In the case of UCH's Law school, education is understood as a public mission orientating students towards participation in political debates and social life. As a UCH Law school academic dean explains, the programme 'has a public mission, so public issues are always debated here; the greater national problems are always being debated and the students participate, as well as the professors'. They explain that students must complete internships (without remuneration) with the Public Defender Service and that academics and students have a preponderant role in several legal reforms carried out in the country.[83] This objective is also found in the same university´s Business school. The focus of this university is on the leadership role that their graduates can (and should) play in public life. As

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[81] Serge Guimond, Guy Begin, and Douglas Palmer, "Education and causal attributions: The development of "person-blame" and "system-blame" ideology," Social Psychology Quarterly, 52 (1989): 126–140.

[82] Quaresma, Entre o herdado, o vivido e o projetado. Estudo de caso sobre o sucesso educativo em dois colégios privados frequentados pelas classes dominantes.

[83] For example, the professors and students of the faculty have actively participated in the public debate regarding the new constitution of the country. This engagement includes the participation in discussions at Congress, press letters and television debates.

one Business school professor indicates, 'We foresee that today, 5, 10, 15 years from now, we will have economists at the Department for Finance, at the Central Bank, at the Department for Economy, at the Department for Social Development, leading the country'. Finally, when it comes to USACH's School of Medicine, we see a different paradigm, as the focus on social issues seems to be related to values such as equality and social justice, promoting a moral spirit of strong social inspiration that was not found in other cases. Regarding the programme's ethos taught to their students, a USACH Medical school academic dean points out that his students 'are students who are able to establish dialogue, (…) they look at medicine in a more social way, probably with more interest and commitment in the communities where they are currently inserted'. In sum, these three universities seek to educate leaders who will use their leadership skills to serve the common good, thus contributing to the rapprochement between these future elites and the rest of the society.

On the other hand, the PUC cases appear as intermediate cases between social and individual education. The social mission is not clearly identified in the institution's mission, which seeks to 'promote the cultivation of science, art and other manifestations of the spirit, as well as the education of higher-level professionals, through teaching, research, creation, and communication' (PUC website, 2019). However, when we analysed the interviews, we concluded that the concern with social issues exists but not as a kind of socially-committed Catholicism. It is based on a conservative religiosity, deeply linked with important personalities of Pinochet's dictatorship, such as Jaime Guzmán, a lawyer, senator and close advisor of the Chilean dictator, who founded the Gremialismo[84] school of thought and a staunchly conservative political party, and who led the creation of Pinochet's Constitution based on economic liberalism ideals. Chilean conservative religiosity, supported by the dictatorship, provides a set of religious narratives to elite members who instrumentalise them to justify their privilege and wealth and to legitimate the socioeconomic status quo.[85] Despite these common features, social concerns are perceived differently in the two PUC courses studied.

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[84] Gremialismo was a right-wing political and economic ideology, deeply inspired in the Catholic social doctrine that claims nationalist-Catholic and anti-communist ideals. This conservative movement played a central role on the opposition to the university reform of the Catholic University of Chile in the 1960s and also led several campaigns against Salvador Allende's government.

[85] Maria Angélica Thumala, Riqueza y piedad. El catolicismo de la elite económica chilena, (Santiago: Editorial Debate, 2007).

In the Engineering school, the educational objectives are orientated such that students understand the 'social role' of their course, contributing to solving technical problems relevant to the country: '[There is] a group of engineers who leave university and do not want to work at USACH or at large companies in Chile. They want to try to change the country (…), to participate in society, to help [Chile] towards change and development' (Academic, Civil Engineering, PUC). In contrast, in the Drama school, the social issue is linked to the idea of educating professionals imbued in a certain reality. Drama students are educated to play a social role as actors, reflecting and promoting social transformation as it can be seen in the following quote: 'The musician's work is not related to politics. On the other hand, in Drama school, the actor is imbued with reality, seeking for a change in this reality and generating speeches of reality' (Academic, Drama, PUC).

Finally, UAI and UANDES seem to be examples of an individual-centred education. The case of the UAI is paradigmatic in this regard because it develops an educational process totally focused on the development of the student's individual abilities: to think critically and creatively, to work collaboratively and to solve problems, following the example of many North American elite universities. As one academic of the UAI Business school states: 'We want for all students to know more deeply what we call the liberal arts, which is to integrate different knowledge not only specific to that programme. The first four years, students have about eight liberal arts courses (contemporary civilisation with a series of classic books), and then students focus directly on their specific branches such as microeconomics, macroeconomics, human resources, etc. The current world is changing, and we want students to be able to look at the problems of the future in a more comprehensive way, considering not only economic knowledge but also that of sociology and psychology. We had the opportunity to visit the University of Columbia, which has been using this liberal arts model for 100 years, and it has been our sponsor and guide towards this implementation.'

This liberal education encouragement is linked to principles such as diversity of thought, inquiry, creation, and entrepreneurship. It is, as a UAI professor says, 'the combination of critical thinking and analytical capacity, with entrepreneurial spirit, with an ethical commitment and with a global vision'. In the perspective of the academics interviewed, this educational model implies the deepening of personal, academic and social skills, and defines individual success and effort as core values. So, the university supports individual initiatives that develop the sense of entrepreneurship. For example, students must develop their own ventures and their start-ups, and are supported by the university in this endeavour. Besides, and differently to

UCH Business School, students have strong training in personal skills, with leadership, and oral expression courses. Finally, the university makes efforts to connect its students with global networks, through internships in different universities (especially in the United States).

The education of individuals perspective is also present at the UANDES, especially in its medical school. In this case, the educational ideal is organised under the idea of holistic education, which implies that students should develop technical competences as well as a set of human qualities and interpersonal skills. As a Medicine professor states, it seeks to train 'doctors who understand it's important to treat well, to be polite, respectful….'. In this instance, the schools' formative culture, shared by academics, is not especially focused on students' social engagement or on the discussion of civic and political issues, as opposed to USACH. Instead, UANDES education culture is focused on moral and ethical issues. As with PUC, this catholic university's conservative ethos can be surprising, since the Latin American Catholic Church has been deeply linked to social and liberation movements. However, UANDES has strong connections with the more conservative forms of Catholicism, such as Opus Dei, which have been supported by Chilean elites.[86] Their adhesion to these new movements is the result of their 'disappointment and resentment' with the 'movement of the Church to the left' during the Allende and Pinochet regimes and the so-called 'red priests', committed to the poor and the defence of human rights.[87]

IV.2. *Selection mechanisms and conceptions of merit and social mobility*

With different ethos and visions, each institution seeks to address one of the classic dilemmas of elite universities: the tension between social inclusion and the preservation of its prestige.[88] This section explores this tension, focusing on two aspects. On the one hand, the selection mechanisms used in each case are described, to analyse their characteristics. On the other hand, and considering these mechanisms, the perceptions that educational actors have of merit, equity, and social mobility are discussed.

Regarding the selection mechanisms, it is important to mention that all these institutions participate in the Unique Admissions System (SUA). This

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[86] Maria Angélica Thumala, "The richness of ordinary life. Religious justification among Chile's business elite," Religion 40, no 1(2010): 14-26.

[87] Thumala, "The richness of ordinary life. Religious justification among Chile's business elite," 17.

[88] Van Zanten, "L'ouverture sociale des grandes écoles: diversification des élites ou renouveau des politiques publiques d'éducation?".

system, which incorporates the majority of Chilean universities (56 institutions), both public and private, requires regular selection processes to be carried out considering three main factors: high school grades; the University Selection Test (PSU) scores; and, since 2013 the Ranking Score of secondary school grades. Despite the above, each institution has the possibility of adding complementary mechanisms to this regular system, thus opening the possibility of differentiation between (elite) universities.

In the selected cases, two additional initiatives to SUA are implemented to balance the pressure to promote access and, at the same time, maintain academic and social prestige. On the one hand, the new private universities (UANDES and UAI) developed a set of financial support for 'talented' students and students who do not have the financial resources to pay for the (high) programme costs. In this way, institutions define educational inclusion primarily as economic levelling and, in some cases, as a strategy to improve the academic quality of the institutions, which usually attract students with lower academic performance compared to traditional universities. Indeed, some private elite university courses (such as Medicine or Business) are the second choice of upper and upper-middle class students whose academic score was lower than the minimum required to be accepted in a public university but whose economic background allows them to attend these high-cost universities. As one UAI Business dean states, 'we have a tremendous challenge in our university, because we know that students always prefer the "classical universities", such as the Catholic University or the University of Chile, and only then comes the UAI'. Therefore, these private universities try to face this challenge by attracting some of the best students, including those who cannot pay their high fees. As a UANDES Medicine dean states: 'We have a scholarship for talented students. There are socioeconomic scholarships, there are performance scholarships, and there are scholarships for alumni'.

On the other hand, historical universities (UCH, PUC, and USACH) have implemented more comprehensive inclusion programmes. As previous studies have described, these programmes have two common characteristics: they seek to support the access of students from low-income families (generally, students from the bottom two socioeconomic groups), generating quotas for those who do not achieve the results in the standardised tests but demonstrate 'academic talent', measured though his academic results in high school,[89] and ii) they develop follow-up mechanisms after admission,

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[89] Each university and programme defines their own criteria for the classification of students and talented students. For example, the Ranking850 Programme (USACH) benefits

through mentoring and/or peer support processes.[90] The idea behind these initiatives is that these talented students can achieve the same results as the rest of the students when they are supported by the institution and by their families. As the PUC Civil Engineering dean states: 'Many efforts are being made so that children from more vulnerable schools and vulnerable economic conditions can come. The Talent and Inclusion programme was started in 2011, based on this: it does not matter the students' grades in the admission tests; what matters is the student's talent[91] (...) [These talented students] enter the programme and then intense support work is done to put them at the same level of knowledge of the "normal" students (...) and after 1 year their academic performance is similar to other students.'

Despite these differences, academics of all programmes share a particular perception about educational inclusion and selection, based on three central ideas. Firstly, it is understood that the inclusion of more vulnerable socioeconomic groups cannot be done at the cost of a reduction in the quality of education, as has happened, according to the most pessimistic voices, with the massification of secondary education.[92] Secondly, educational inclusion does not seek to generate radical transformations in the socioeconomic composition of institutions, but rather to reduce the processes of socio-cultural homogenisation produced by standardised selection tests and, in the case of PUC Civil Engineering, to promote a more balanced gender composition. Finally, inclusion is developed through a logic of merit where it is understood that students who enter through a special path have made an effort and/or have a particular talent.[93] Institutional interviews reflect on these aspects: 'Academic excellence is the basis of our programme (…) We make a lot of social inclusion, but without ignoring the importance of

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students who obtain the highest score in the Ranking Score of Secondary School grades. On the other hand, the SIPPE (UCH) programme is focused on students who are in the top 10% or 20% of grades in their school.

[90] Villalobos, et al., "Social justice debate and college access in Latin America. Merit or need? The role of educational institutions and state in broadening access to Higher Education in the Region".

[91] A talented student is perceived as someone with high interest and good marks in a specific area of knowledge; in other words, a student that cannot belong to the best students in country but is sufficiently good and motivated enough to deserve a chance of attending in this institution.

[92] Quaresma, Maria Luísa, Pedro Abrantes, and João Lopes, "Trayectorias y vivencias escolares en colegios socialmente contrastantes," Andamios 15, no.38 (2018): 365-386.

[93] Villalobos, et al. "Social justice debate and college access in Latin America. Merit or need? The role of educational institutions and state in broadening access to Higher Education in the Region"

academic excellence' (Academic, Law, UCH). Another interviewee also states: 'We value meritocracy, social mobility and equal opportunities in a very important way' (Dean, Business, UCH).

In conclusion, elite institutional universities develop some social inclusion initiatives/policies[94] for a limited number of students, whose fundamental focus is the promotion and incorporation of students who are academically talented and socially vulnerable. These policies seek to expand the social heterogeneity of the institutions, but in a timid and limited way.[95]

IV.3. *Socio-economic and cultural background of students*

With multiple organisational values and identities and different mechanisms of selection, universities receive students with different profiles, even though they belong, overall, to Chilean economic and/or cultural elites. In this sense, this chapter seeks to understand the relation between elite universities and the socioeconomic and cultural background of students.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on four variables: i) the percentage of students with a mother who has completed higher education; ii) the percentage of students living in households with monthly incomes above USD 2,600; iii) the percentage of students living in the seven municipalities in Metropolitan Area rated by Ortiz and Escolando as the 'high-income cone' (Lo Barnechea, Providencia, Las Condes, Vitacura, La Reina and Ñuñoa);[96] and iv) the percentage of students who declare to have cultural practices

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[94] In Chile, three groups of initiatives of this type are promoted. Firstly, 13 higher education institutions (mainly universities) have implemented Propaedeutic Programmes, which offer to talented students attending the last year of secondary education (12th grade) in vulnerable schools the possibility to access a training process that ensures direct entry to the university. Secondly, since 2014, the Ministry for Education has implemented PACE, which seeks to ensure effective access to students from vulnerable schools that have demonstrated high performance in their educational contexts. Finally, in the past decade, several selective universities have implemented specific access programmes, such as the Inclusion Talent Programme (PUC), the SIPEE (UCH) or the Ranking 850 Programme (USACH).

[95] For more information about social inclusion initiatives: Otavio Lizama, Francisco Gil, and Beatriz Rahmer, "La Experiencia de la Inclusión en la Educación Superior en Chile" (Santiago de Chile: Editorial USACH, 2018); Alvaro González and Francisco Gil, "Les défis de la transition vers l'enseignement upérieur : idées et évidences depuis le contexte chilien," Synergies Chili, 14 (2018): 47-58; Cristóbal Villalobos, Programas de acceso inclusivo a la Educación Superior para estudiantes vulnerables en Chile (Santiago de Chile: Ministerio de Educación, 2018).

[96] Jorge Ortiz and Severino Escolano, "Movilidad residencial del sector de renta alta del Gran Santiago (Chile): hacia el aumento de la complejidad de los patrones socioespaciales de segregación," EURE, 39, no.118 (2013): 77-96.

qualified as elite (going to the opera, ballet, classical music concerts, photography or cinema art shows). Following Khan's definition, elites are not necessarily at the top in all dimensions of life (political, cultural and economic), but they are at least in some of them. For this reason, the composition of the elite should be an empirical subject of analysis. In our case, we analyse two groups of variables. On the one hand, parents' schooling and cultural practices have been highlighted as variables that allow the characterisation of elites in cultural terms.[97] On the other hand, the income of the families and the place of residence have been taken into consideration as socioeconomic variables that characterise the elites.[98]

Table 2

Economic and cultural capital distribution of students

N	University	Programme	Mother with higher education (%)[a]	Households with income above 2600 USD[a]	High income cone neigh-bourhoods[b]	Elite cultural practices[b]
1	PUC	Drama	75.0%	33.3%	32.2%	97.2%
2	PUC	Civil Engineering	55.4%	64.4%	36.8%	47.7%
3	UCH	Law	51.5%	34.9%	31.8%	70.4%
4	UCH	Business	49.8%	51.3%	44.5%	45.1%
5	USACH	Medicine	33.3%	30.6%	10.3%	60.2%
6	UANDES	Medicine	67.4%	72.7%	61.6%	49.5%
7	UANDES	Literature	100%	88.6%	49.0%	73.5%
8	UAI	Business	76.3%	82.0%	58.0%	50.3%

Source: Own development.

Notes: a = information collected from the Higher Education Information System;
b = information collected from the survey.

The first broad conclusion refers to cultural capital, as expressed in the percentage of students with mothers with higher education and in the elite

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[97] Bourdieu and Passeron, Les héritiers.
[98] Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon-Charlot, Les ghettos du gotha. Comment la bourgeoisie défend ses espaces (Paris: La Découverte, 2007); Mension-Rigau, Aristocrates et grands bourgeois.

cultural practices declared by students. Although all the cases show an overrepresentation of students in both variables (except for USACH), it is possible to observe that the students of courses more linked to the humanities and arts, from both public and private universities (UCH Law, UANDES Literature, PUC Drama), are those who have higher levels of elite cultural practices despite their lower households incomes and the lower proportion of these students living in high income neighbourhoods, compared to other elite course students (see Table 2). So, the explanation for these elite cultural practices is not directly linked to students' financial capital but rather to the osmotic transmission of tastes and practices learned through their families' socialisation processes.[99] As a UCH Law academic indicates, family cultural capital 'is very important (…) [This capital refers to the] student's previous educational level, a kind of culture that has not been explicitly taught but reflects the environment in which you have lived, the possibility that you have had of travelling, of reading… and that reflects the previous culture with which they leave.' From this point of view, cultural capital is perceived as an important asset to enter and remain in certain educational institutions. As Bourdieu and Passeron state, access to the most prestigious universities and academic success are easier when students have familiarity with the dominant culture, which is the culture rewarded by the education system.[100]

Secondly, it is possible to observe that the newest private universities (UAI and UANDES) have the highest representation of students from high-income families and that, in addition, they concentrate an important part of students from a specific geographical sector of Santiago: the high-income cone. This means they are quite homogeneous and hyper-selective universities, attended by an important part of the country's upper class. As a UANDES Medicine academic says: 'Most of the students belong to the most advantaged socioeconomic groups, they are people who come from families with enough resources (…) generally speaking, they are students who come from highly respected schools and belong to high socioeconomic families'.

The PUC Civil Engineering programme could also be added to this group, although the proportion of students from the upper-class neighbourhoods (in the north-east corner of Santiago) is much smaller, probably due to the location of the university (the programme is located in Campus San Joaquín, in the southeast of the city) or the student selection

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[99] Agnès Van Zanten, "A family affair reproducing elite positions and preserving the ideals of meritocratic competition and youth autonomy," in Elites, privilege and excellence. The national and global redefinition of educational advantage, ed. Agnès Van Zanten, Stephen Ball, and Brigitte Darchy-Koechlin (New York: Routledge), 29-42.

[100] Bourdieu and Passeron, Les héritiers.

processes. Either way, the truth is that there is a recognition that an important part of these students would also come from well-off sectors: 'In this respect, the School always has a high preference for students coming from private schools, which exceeds 80% (…) It has always been high, but (…) today that preference has escalated. Why? I am not sure (...) but it could be caused by selection tests (...) that sometimes harm people who are in more vulnerable socioeconomic conditions' (Academic, Civil Engineering, PUC).

V. Conclusions

The study sought to analyse eight paradigmatic cases of elite universities and elite programmes in Chile, accounting for institutional ethos, selection mechanisms and perceptions of equity and their role in the education of Chilean elites. The main objective has been to understand the role of these universities and programmes in the processes of reproduction and social mobility, an especially important issue in the Chilean context, which is characterised by a massification of tertiary education and very high levels of economic inequality.

The analyses reveal two main findings. First, and despite being understood as a selective group of institutions, elite universities and programmes have multiple differences in organisational, cultural, and political terms. In a highly competitive and commodified space such as the Chilean higher education system, these institutions seek to build their own 'market niche', generating distinctions not only with 'mass universities' but also among elite institutions, mobilising for it discourses, different values, and institutional devices. So, each institution seeks to solve the tension between the massification and the preservation of its prestige in a different way. Some universities, like UCH and USACH, put their focus on the public mission and on the education of national leaders, expressing a strong concern for the common good. But, at the same time, they provide some opportunities to a restricted number of lower-middle and lower class students who have proved to be talented and 'deserve' to be part of a 'new elite'. The PUC, despite expressing little concern for a public mission, shares with the previous universities the aim of preparing future leaders and opening itself to social mobility, receiving non-elite talented students. A different case is UANDES, whose focus is on high moral holistic individual education, not giving special attention to openness or the social diversity of its students, thereby facilitating social reproduction processes. Finally, in the case of UAI, its entrepreneurial spirit and connections with economic and financial companies explain the

special focus assigned to the idea of merit and effort, and so to the idea of social mobility as an individual conquer.

These particularities or differences do not imply, however, that, seen as a whole, these institutions do not have some similarities when facing the massification of higher education. This constitutes the second finding of the study. Thus, all universities seek to face the current scenario by opening up -even if with different magnitudes- to the diversity and social heterogeneity of their students; as long as, however, that this change does not structurally modify the sociocultural composition or the mission of the institution. All elite universities and programmes promote inclusive policies to enrol socioeconomically heterogeneous students. However, these policies promote a controlled opening up that allows them to maintain their (symbolic or real) prestige and value. Thus, they adapt to the new national context of massification of higher education but preserving their historical privileges.

These conclusions have important implications for the discussion on mobility, reproduction, and social inequality. Firstly, it is important to highlight that these elite universities do not seek to remain outside the democratisation process of Chilean higher education, being, on the contrary, permeable to it. The discussions towards integration, the selection mechanisms towards social diversity and the evidenced tensions regarding their elite educational mission prove it, showing their concern about social mobility and reproduction. Despite this concern, the universities and programmes studied in this research do not seem to contribute to changing the inequality levels and the low intergenerational mobility in Chile. Recent research by Zimmermann has highlighted the important role that elite universities play in the social reproduction of economic elites;[101] Joignant also found evidence of the social reproduction within political elites.[102] In the same line, studies about social mobility in Chile[103] have confirmed the low levels of mobility existing in the economic and political elites, as well as the difficulties that educational mobility have in becoming engines of social mobility.[104] In this context, this research contributes to conclude that elite universities have not

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[101] Zimmerman, "Elite Colleges and Upward Mobility to Top Jobs and Top Incomes"

[102] Joignant, "Tecnócratas, technopols y dirigentes de partido: tipos de agentes y especies de capital en las elites gubernamentales de la Concertación (1990-2010)"

[103] Pablo Celhay, Claudia Sanhueza, and José Zubizarreta, "Intergenerational mobility of income and schooling: 1996-2006," Revista de Análisis Económico 25, no.2 (2010): 43-63; Florencia Torche, "Unequal But Fluid: Social Mobility in Chile in Comparative Perspective," American Sociological Review 70, no.3 (2005): 422-450.

[104] Nuñez and Miranda, "Intergenerational income and educational mobility in urban Chile"

been able to put an end to their historical role in perpetuating social reproduction in Chile.

Moving towards a deeper understanding of these institutions is, therefore, a relevant issue for future educational research. Thus, little explored aspects in this research, such as the relationship between Chilean elite universities and the world's elite universities, the teaching-learning processes that are developed in these spaces, the organisational functioning aspects of these institutions and the role of elite universities in the production, dissemination and/or consolidation of certain national policies and programmes are interesting topics to investigate in future studies.

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