

**Perspectives of learning during the transition
from secondary school to university:
A comparative study of first generation university students in
Chile and New Zealand**

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Abstract

While tertiary education has grown rapidly in most countries in recent years, retention rates and educational success of many first generation students is still below that of their counterparts from tertiary-educated family backgrounds. This presents a significant challenge to universities seeking to better understand and support such students. This comparative study explores the perspectives of learning along educational transitions between school and university that were experienced by two groups of first generation university students in Chile and New Zealand. The research draws on the narratives of 24 working class university students enrolled in teacher education programmes and studying to become teachers. Unlike some previous studies of first generation students that take a deficit approach to the educational under-achievement of working class students, this research assumes that the barriers these students face are primarily located within institutional structures and that the distinctive perspectives of first generation university students make a positive contribution to institutional development.

A photo-elicitation methodological approach was undertaken whereby the participants were asked to collect images that represented their school and university experiences. These images were then assembled onto a storyboard. Group and individual interviews were also conducted.

Through a dialogical approach derived from Bakhtin, the thesis examines the cultural, social and emotional tensions and accomplishments they encountered in the course of their educational journeys through school and university. Employing Bourdieu's notion of habitus, and Quinn's notion of imagined social capital, this study found that for New Zealand students, imagined social capital was largely located in institutional

contexts, while in Chile these were more closely associated with social groups and peers. The findings show that New Zealand has a more flexible and supportive system of school to university transitions than Chile. In both countries, however, students placed considerable value on experiences that allowed them to connect their own social background with what they learned at university.

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Glossary of terms

Scientific-humanistic education (or schools): In Chile, scientific-humanistic schools are set up to prepare students for university. Secondary schools have two initial years with a common and compulsory curriculum for all students and two final years with a restricted number of optional learning areas which are chosen according to student vocational aspirations and interests. There are three learning areas: scientific (maths, biology, chemistry, physics), humanistic (social studies, language and communication, psychology, philosophy) and artistic (visual arts and music).

Technical education (or schools): Technical education provides students with a technical certificate which enables them to work in specific vocational fields. There are 46 learning fields (specialities) across schools distributed in 14 occupational fields (Sevilla, n.d.). It is expected that students enter the workforce or pursue technical tertiary studies in tertiary (non-university) institutions. However, currently, many students from technical schools still apply and enrol in university studies.

State prestigious schools: In Chile these are referred to as emblematic schools. They are highly selective and academically demanding state schools. State prestigious schools in Chile start at Year Seven, whereas **common state schools (non-selective)** start at Year Nine. These schools were created as a way to facilitate university access for high achieving low income students.

Private voucher schools: In Chile, private schools receive both public and private funding. These schools belong to different churches, foundations or private investors. Some of them are for-profit institutions. Currently this system receives more than 54% of the total student enrolments (Leiva; Saavedra & Muñoz, n.d).

Kura kaupapa schools: In New Zealand, Kura Kaupapa Māori are schools in which the principal language of instruction is Māori and education is based on Māori culture and values (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Decile rating: In New Zealand, a school's decile indicates the extent to which a school draws its students from a low socio-economic community, with decile 1 representing a low socio-economic community, and decile 10, a high socio-economic community. The decile rating for a school is calculated by using a number of census-related variables from the school community (including household income, parental occupation and qualifications, income support and household crowding) (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Abbreviations

NCEA In New Zealand, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was created in 2002 with the goal to make assessment more aligned to the new demands of the labour market and the increasing diversity of secondary school students (Openshaw, 2005). "Each year, students study a number of courses or subjects". "In each subject, skills and knowledge are assessed against a number of standards". "Students must achieve a certain number of credits to gain an NCEA certificate which is awarded at three different levels of NCEA certificate". "In general, students work through levels 1 to 3 in years 11 to 13 at school". "Students are recognized for high achievement at each level by gaining NCEA with Merit or NCEA with Excellence" (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.). University entrance level is achieved through a combination of credits achieved in literacy, numeracy and a list of "approved subjects" that each university programme demands.

PISA The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey held by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 2000. The PISA tests aim to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. To date, students representing more than 70 countries have participated in the assessment. The test assesses three key subjects: reading, mathematics and science, with a focus on one subject in each year of assessment. In 2012, some countries also participated in the optional assessments of Problem Solving and Financial Literacy (OECD, n.d.)

PSU In Chile, the University Entrance Test (PSU) is a standardized test that was created in 2003 for all students applying to university after secondary school. It includes two main tests of language and maths and two selective tests in history, social sciences or science (biology, chemistry or physics). The University Entrance System weighs the PSU score with other secondary criteria such as the school's average marks and the school's ranking marks (MINEDUC, 2013c).

SIMCE In Chile, the national assessment system of educational results was created in 1988 and consists of an external standard evaluation. The SIMCE is applied on a yearly basis in Years 2, 4, 6, 8 (primary school) and Years 10 and 11 (secondary school). The assessed learning fields are maths, literacy, English and physical education. The SIMCE results are public and their goal is to measure the school's progress to conduct educational policies (Agencia de calidad de la educación, n.d.).

TIMSS The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Is an international test created by the International Study Center from the Lynch School of Education, Boston College. It has been conducted on a regular four-year cycle since 1995 and it measures trends in mathematics and science achievements in grades four and

eight. In 2011, 63 countries and 14 benchmark entities (regional jurisdictions of countries, such as states, participated in TIMSS) (IEA & Boston College, n.d.).

UE In New Zealand, University Entrance (UE) Test.

CHAPTER 1:

APPROACHING EDUCATIONAL TRANSITIONS

Introducing the study

Recent international comparative studies have shown that being a first generation student is a key influencing factor in access and retention at university. One study covering non-traditional university students from ten countries (Australia, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the United States) found that parental education levels have a greater influence on students' university access than parents' employment or financial status (Thomas & Quinn, 2007). This study also found that levels of parental education impact the educational progression of other targeted groups, such as ethnic minorities or students with disabilities (Thomas & Quinn, 2007).

Many of the studies focusing on first generation students have been conducted in the United States. These studies suggest that students with parents who did not have university experience have lower retention levels and lower academic attainments throughout their educational experience compared to students whose parents had university experience (Choy, 2001; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Ishitani, 2006; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

Consequently, educational policies aimed at widening access and university retention have begun to consider parents' educational levels as a significant factor (Jehangir, 2010; Thomas & Quinn, 2007). Some countries, such as Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, now include parental education as a new variable, along with other factors such as geographic location or parental employment, when they target students in risk of attrition (Thomas & Quinn, 2007). In the United States in turn, being a first generation university student is a favourable criterion when applying to some universities (Virginia Tech, 2013).

Despite parental education being highlighted by public educational policies in several countries we still require a great deal more detail to understand the complexities of first generation students and their transitions to tertiary education. This research explores the perspectives of first generation university students during the transitions from secondary school to university in two countries, Chile and New Zealand. The study applied photo-elicitation interviews (Clark-Ibañez, 2007) and group interviews to twelve students in each country to collect their narratives of the transition between secondary school and university. Participants were invited to take pictures of their transitional educational experience between school and university and to interpret them during the interview. They also built a storyboard with the pictures finding connections between both periods. At the end of the process they reviewed the process in a group interview.

The first goal of this research was to contribute to the emerging interest in Chile and New Zealand about first generation university students. The number of first generation university students in Chile has been estimated at more than 70% of the total student enrolment (Contreras, Gallegos & Meneses, 2009). No similar estimate has been made in New Zealand. However, the data show that in New Zealand a lower number of young people attain a higher educational level than their parents in comparison with other OECD countries (OECD, 2012). Chile, in turn, still has an expanding educational system and has high levels of intergenerational educational mobility (Torche, 2005). This suggests that the proportion of first generation students is probably higher in Chile than in New Zealand.

In both countries, the reality of first generation students is beginning to be a matter of concern for researchers and universities. In Chile, where most policies have targeted students according to their respective family's household income, new studies have focused on parents' educational level and their influences on educational choices at university (Castillo & Cabezas, 2010; CPCE, 2009). In New Zealand, where transition support programmes have been historically focused on Māori and Pacific groups, some

universities have incorporated the category, “first in their family”¹ to target those students who need more support (Haine, 2014).

The second goal of this study is to support possible transfer of educational experiences between New Zealand and Chile in the future. Recent events in Chile have highlighted many of the challenges facing the Chilean educational system. For example, there was an important social movement in Chile led by secondary school students in 2006 and by university students in 2011. During the movement in 2011, schools and universities were occupied across the country for more than five months and protests numbered hundreds of thousands of people. The movement’s main demands included a call to change the structure of the extremely unequal and business-focused educational system. Students demanded that state education would be widely available across educational sectors, eliminating social segregation in school and universities, banning for-profit educational institutions and providing free tertiary education for all students. This educational and social movement has changed the nature of political and public debate in Chile questioning the main principles and the structure of the current political and economic order (Mayol, 2013).

Until 2013, according to the public opinion polls, education was the main public concern in Chile (CERC, 2013). The new government led by Michelle Bachelet is proposing structural transformations to the system. Most of the recommendations take students’ demands into account and are aimed at addressing inequalities (Comando de campaña de Michelle Bachelet, 2013). There is a move towards taking central government control of all state schools, which are currently run through local councils. Regulations governing universities will be also be strengthened. The government will ban selection procedures that increase social segregation between schools. For-profit schools will not receive government funding. Free tertiary education will benefit 100% of students in 2020. An important tax reform will be made to fund these changes and other initiatives.

¹ For example, there is a “First in Family” support programme at the School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand (personal communication, B. T. Smith. September 21, 2008).

Many of the anticipated changes in education in the next few years will be directed at supporting educational transitions. One of the aspects under debate is how to create systems to connect secondary and tertiary education (Comando de campaña de Michelle Bachelet, 2013). Some commentators have argued in favour of replicating educational practices in England and New Zealand by creating a National Certification System, which would enable students to transfer smoothly between different institutions and between educational levels (See for example Armanet, 2005). Another issue that will be acted on in the next few years is the change in the structure of transitions in the school system, which will increase the duration of secondary schooling from four to six years and will create a more structured and specialized pattern during the last two years of school. There is also considerable debate about the need to shorten the length of programmes in universities (Pey, Duran, & Jorquera, 2012). The last government proposed shortening university programmes from five to three years, mainly based on the need to prioritize cost efficiency. However, universities responded that prior to this a deeper change would have to take place in the way schools prepare students to embark on an undergraduate programme. They argued that in the current environment, and given the inconsistent overall quality of secondary schooling, many students coming from secondary school need time to be brought up to the expected university level to cope with academic demands (Pey et al., 2012).

In this context, it is necessary to develop policies oriented to support these education transitions. These policies need to facilitate a wide range of transitions according to the characteristics of the new students in the system, particularly first generation university students. New programmes should support these students in their access to more diverse programmes and better universities. They also should provide support for these students to persist, graduate and to progress to postgraduate levels. To achieve these goals Chile needs to introduce changes in secondary school to provide new students with the competences and skills required to achieve a successful university experience (Valverde, 2009).

Chile can learn from international experiences that have shown positive results in this field and address the challenge that Coleman (1968) raised of the need for equality in

access, treatment and results. In the context of heated debates about the future of the educational system, the New Zealand system has attracted interest in Chile, mainly following its high results in the PISA test. As will be described in the following chapters, New Zealand in comparison to Chile has a more consolidated transition policy, more flexible and supported learning pathways, a less segregated school system and has experienced some achievement in the reduction of the gap between different social groups accessing tertiary education (See Openshaw, 2005 and Vaughan & Boyd, 2005 among others). All these elements provide attractive alternatives for Chilean public policy makers to consider in the transformation of the Chilean system.

However, the comparisons that have been made between Chile and other countries are usually restricted to macro aspects such as public investment, teacher salaries or curricular structures among others, without considering the particular social contexts that influence educational outcomes. In taking a narrative approach this research compares both macro and micro factors that influence educational transitions for first year university students. The proposition of this study is that public policy designers should not assume that students and teachers from different contexts will show similar responses to similar structures. The transfer of public policies needs to be based on a careful contextualisation of data. I do not consider students as mere receptors of a specific form of educational provision. The narratives enabled me to distinguish the specific cultural products that students create to connect the institutional environment and structure with their own identity and sense of belonging.

This study is focused on three different aspects of educational transition. Firstly, I identify the most valuable and supportive aspects in both educational transitions systems. Secondly, the research focuses on the strategies that students used to overcome the barriers that the system put on their educational progression. Finally, the research explores the perspective of learning that participants in my study created throughout their educational journey which helped them to build connections across time (between different levels) and across spaces (between their social place of belonging and the academic environment).

As other studies have done previously (See for example Jehangir, 2010), I selected first generation university students coming from working class families. These are two categories which tend to overlap in most countries (Quinn & Thomas, 2007). In selecting working class students I wanted to combine family criteria with social criteria. Working class students come from social groups that historically have been excluded from academia. These students come from environments, in terms of urban location, types of occupation and life style that tend to be different from the social groups that have traditionally dominated universities. The research focused on the way students negotiate this encounter between these two different cultural spheres in each country, when they refer to their approach to learning.

The students included in this research were also enrolled in teacher education programmes. There are three reasons for this and the first reason is methodological. Perceptions of learning are influenced by vocational orientations. Including students from different programmes would have made the comparative analysis more complex. Secondly, it was anticipated that teacher education students would potentially be able to provide a particularly insightful perspective about their learning experience. Secondly, teaching programmes are one of the main priorities of public education policies in Chile. Education policies in Chile are increasingly focused on enhancing the teacher training courses and creating new criteria for eligibility and graduation.² Accordingly, I anticipated that the outcomes of this study could contribute to the development of teaching programmes in Chile as I aimed to identify which aspects of these programmes play a role in supporting students through their learning transitions.

Based on this rationale, the guiding questions for this research are as follows.

² One of the main concerns is the low interest that young people have in applying for teaching studies at university. As a consequence, most students who choose teaching as a university option, have low results in the entrance test. For this reason, today there are special incentives for high achieving students to apply to BTeach programmes such as free fees, scholarships and training programmes in foreign countries. The students who receive these benefits have to teach in low decile schools during the first years following graduation. <http://www.becavocaciondeprofesor.cl>

Research questions

What perspectives do first generation university students from working class families in Chile and New Zealand have of their learning processes as they navigate through the school to university transition?

Specific sub-questions

Who are the people that students believe help them to manage their own learning process during their school to university transition?

What are the institutional structures or programmes that students considered to be the most important in supporting their transition from secondary school to university?

What are the learning settings that students believe had a significant influence on their learning process during their school to university transition?

What are the main milestones that students identify which connect and integrate their different learning experiences during their school to university transition?

Towards a theoretical approach to learning transitions

Due to the absence of higher education experience within their families, many first generation university students do not follow the academic pathway “naturally”. They sometimes need extra support (London, 1996; Rendon, 1992). An educational system aimed at broadening the educational opportunities of first generation university students must provide them with flexible learning routes and educational environments in which they feel their background is considered and their expectations reinforced. This situates educational transitions as one of the main issues to facilitate the progression of these students to the university.

The support to educational transitions has been raised as one of the most important policies to break the cycle of social exclusion (OECD, 2000, 2004). The OECD and the World Bank funded a review of career guidance policies in 37 countries which stated that the difficulties that students face as they move through the education and labour market is a significant cause of social exclusion and educational disadvantage (OECD, 2004). A key initiative that the OECD proposes is the creation of stronger transitional systems based on “well organised pathways that connect initial education with work [and further study and] widespread opportunities to combine workplace with education, among others” (OECD, 2004, p. 13).

One of the most important issues to consider in transition policies is the role of secondary education, which is under revision in the context of widening educational access (See for example Hoffman, Vargas, Venezia, & Miller, 2007). Considered in the past as a final stage for most students, secondary school is now being seen instead as a transition to prepare young people for tertiary studies. Some have proposed that secondary schools become increasingly differentiated from primary school and increase their connections and identity with university and other tertiary institution to facilitate transitions (Hoffman et al., 2007; Tedesco, 2001).

The role of secondary structures to reproduce educational social differences has been under debate. Some countries promote a comprehensive curriculum and others an early division between vocational and academic pathways. Studies show that a system which tracks students from an early stage tends to lead students to similar areas of their parents' employment, reproducing the social division of labour from an early stage in life (Schnabel et al. 2002 as cited in Higgins, Vaughan, & Dalziel, 2008). Systems that track students in different learning pathways also show a bigger gap between different social groups in terms of academic results in comparison to systems with a common curriculum (Dupriez, Dumay, & Vause, 2008). However, the latter systems can be problematic for students with a lower educational family background because these students sometimes lack knowledge about selecting subjects according to their interests (Higgins et al., 2008).

Another important issue to consider in transition policies is the role of tertiary education institutions to create supporting programmes according to the characteristics and demands of heterogeneous students reinforcing their retention and progression to postgraduate levels. Effective educational transitions system offer students diverse, flexible and clear learning pathways to achieve their academic goals (OECD, 2000). In the field of tertiary education, studies state that first generation university students often need to complete a short preparatory tertiary education programme before feeling confident to apply to university (London, 1996; Rendon, 1992). As a consequence, it is increasingly necessary to create instruments that guide students all the way through their educational experience. Consequently, educational policies need to develop longitudinal perspectives to create instruments to support students across different educational levels, from school to tertiary studies and professional practices.

Several programmes across the world have focused on under-represented groups in their transition to tertiary studies and university, such as the TRIO programme (US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013) or the “Lisbon Strategy” (European Commission Youth Archive, 2013) in Europe. However, most of these existing programmes are dominated by a “deficit approach”, which locates the causes of non-participation primarily within individuals (See for example the critics to the "Bridging the gap" policy in England by Colley & Hodkinson, 2001). This approach positions students and families from low income and minority groups as inadequate and culpable for their lack of adjustment to the system. Thus, the potential contribution of these people to higher education is ignored and instead they are assumed to require fixing or normalizing actions through compensatory or remedial programmes.

However, I argue that the notion of transition applied within these programmes is based on a technocratic approach to educational expansion in general which reinterprets education as a personal good instead of an instrument of social cohesion. The forces of the market on education reduce teaching and learning to the “process of production and provision that must meet market goals of transfer efficiency and quality control” (Boyles, 2000, cited in Ball, 2006, p. 13). Consequently, “soft services” (Ball, 2006) such as human interactions are put on the same level as “hard

services” (facilities and resources) “which can be standardised, calculated, qualified and compared” (Ball, 2006, p. 13).

At the same time, increasing access to education has been perceived by many as a means of achieving higher levels of economic productivity within a competitive global market. Proponents of this perspective argue that widening access to education reinforces the link between education and the industrial field through a process of “vocationalisation” (Halsey & Floud, 1961). In this context, schools and universities have been increasingly been managed in line with efficiency and productivity criteria which has led to the devaluation of certain programmes such as humanities or the arts that do not necessarily have direct links to the labour market (Apple, 1997).

These ideological assumptions also influenced a notion of lifelong learning, that has shifted over the years from being understood as a “personal good and as an inherent aspect of democratic life [to] the formation of human capital and as an investment in economic development” (Biesta, 2006, p. 169). According to Biesta, this new approach is a highly individualized transformation of the concept of lifelong learning “from a right into a duty” (p. 169) and as such it loses its central focus, which is the reciprocal contribution between formal and informal spaces of learning.

The notion of transition within these policy perspectives is highly linear and standardized (Colley, 2010; Higgis, 2002; Quinn, 2010b) and ignores that learning experiences are socially, spatially and temporally situated. They assume that individuals strive for similar and homogeneous goals, like certifications and qualifications, wider opportunities and social mobility. Transitions are restricted to moments of “entry” and “exit” and public policies are mainly oriented to support students to overcome these critical moments. Any alteration on this course through attrition or interruptions tends to be perceived as a failure or waste of time and individuals are explicitly or implicitly blamed for this failure.

In addition, the internationalisation process has also contributed to de-localising the way we think about educational transitions. Education test scores are increasingly defined and measured by global economic organisations (OECD, UNESCO and the

European Union among others) or trans-continental university agreements (such as the Bologna Plan) which ignores the local context of pedagogic relations. The dominant trend is to conceive of educational processes in “real time” (Christou, 2010), i.e., an homogeneous, globalized, synchronized and de-contextualized process of learning. Accordingly, educational transitions are frequently linked to these expectations, levels of access and educational achievement with few references to the influence of pedagogical and curricular elements (Quinn, 2010b).

This approach is sustained in a liberal theory of social mobility (Erickson & Goldthrope, 1992) that assumes that technological progress will result in an increasingly flexible labour field in which class and race will be replaced by merit as a criteria to gain access to better positions in the labour market. From this perspective, widening education is seen as a consequence of technological changes that put pressure on the labour market to create skilled occupations. In this context, the role of public policies is focussed on facilitating the conditions for economic growth and is subordinated to the demands of the economy.

What this approach hides is that access and progress within the education system is less a consequence of deficiencies amongst particular students and more a consequence of competition between social groups for the advantages that educational access confers (Bourdieu, 1988; Collins, 1979; Hirsh, 1977). Academic credentials have become a site of struggle between different social groups in their attempt to access or remain in better positions (Brown, 1997). This struggle is seen in the limited access of socially and economically privileged families to elite schools and elite universities, in which merit is not the main criteria; rather financial family status is (Brown, 1997).

Thus, although access to higher education has broadened over time, qualifications continue to be distributed unequally between social groups. Increased educational access has not reduced the gap between the incomes of different social groups. In fact, these inequalities have deepened internationally at the same time as access to higher education has increased (Ortiz & Cummins, 2011). Private and vocational institutions are the main providers of education for low income groups while the student body of

many prestigious universities are drawn from the wealthiest groups. The most disadvantaged students also tend to concentrate in some university degree programmes most of which are linked to jobs with lower salary expectations (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010). Also, students from high income backgrounds or students from ethnic dominant groups are the ones who tend to achieve the highest rates of graduation in comparison with other groups (Altbach et al., 2010).

In light of this, this study has approached the experience of educational transitions between secondary and university not merely as an individual issue, but as a product of a class-based struggle. I am inspired by two theoretical schools that have explored the relations between social injustices and educational institutions. Theories of reproduction in education (Baudelot & Establet, 1974; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1976) explore the ways through which the educational system reproduces an unequal social structure in capitalist societies. They focus on the different types of knowledge that schools and universities prioritise as being the only legitimate form of knowledge while excluding the knowledge base of socially marginalised groups. This research is also influenced by the emancipatory and critical tradition in education (Freire, 1971; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 1997, 1998; McLaren, 1997). This tradition recognises that schools and universities are instruments of oppression and exclusion. However, they focus on the radical potential of liberatory pedagogical actions and the transformative potential of socially excluded groups to challenge these power relationships.

Accordingly, in Chapter Three, I contest the studies based on Spady and Tinto's (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975; 1987, 1997, 1998) approach to studying educational transitions and retention in higher education. Tinto understood that the problems that students face when progressing through university are mainly related to weak integration into the academic environment. In his analysis he does not incorporate the exclusion that universities exert over students who come from non-traditional backgrounds.

In contrast, Thomas and Quinn, following Freire and Bourdieu propose a "transformative approach" to educational transitions (Thomas & Quinn, 2007, p.

105), which considers that the diversity of new students, instead of being a problem is an opportunity for institutional change and development. Accordingly, the goal is to encourage schools and universities to review their inner decisional and power structures to adequately meet the requirements of the new and heterogeneous group of students coming to the system.

I consider that schools and universities are complex institutions that reproduce existing social structures, but they have also the potential to become democratic and multicultural spheres (McLaren, 1997). One of the most important ways to pursue this institutional change is to know how students have been excluded historically from the system and subsequently create their own ways of engaging with knowledge. I follow Giroux's (1997) argument that knowing the kind of learning that is meaningful for students is the first step in making this learning experience a tool for social transformation and change.

In Chapter three I review several studies that have taken a narrative approach to the analysis of first generation student experiences. These studies focus on the relationship between institutional structures and students' identities. I consider my research to be an extension of this tradition. Narrative approaches express the complexities of students' transitional experiences and the contradictions that students experience between different identities along the way.

In this study I frame the concept of transition in terms of a complex interplay between integration and resistance, whereby students combine different discourses and strategies according to the context in which they are situated. These discourses can be oriented to the institutional field, their cultural belonging or can create bridges and connections between both spheres. Therefore, in this research I attempted to distinguish how hegemonic and contra-hegemonic forces are part of student learning perspectives. To achieve that, I challenge the totalizing project of technocratic approaches which attempt to transform learning into a series of standardised results. I understand the experience of learning as an open and never completed space of dialogue. As Luclan states:

Students [can] creatively appropriate the past of a living dialogue, an affirmation of the multiplicity of narratives and the need to judge those narratives not as timeless or as monolithic discourses, but as social and historical inventions that can be refigured in the interest of creating more democratic forms of public life. (Luclan as cited in Giroux, 1997, p. 124)

To this extent, I understand learning as an holistic social, cognitive and emotional experience that goes beyond disciplinary spheres (Giroux, 1997), beyond the boundaries of institutions and beyond specific educational levels. Learning has a transformative potential which can be seen when one analyses the connections that students make between their different experiences, institutional and non-institutional, individual and collective, disciplinary and cross-disciplinary.

In order to examine this, the research in this thesis is informed by a dialogical approach (Bakhtin, 1973, 1981, 1982, 1986a, 1986b; Frank, 2005; Haye & Larrain, 2011; Matusov, 2009; Voloshinov, 1973). Similar to social constructivism and post-structuralism, dialogism positions learning within its social context, in the frame of the social conditions and relationships where education takes place. What I highlight through dialogism is the interplay of different discourses through which people interpret their learning experiences. These discourses at the same time reflect the ideological conflicts between different groups in which certain perspectives of learning are institutionalised as the only legitimate ones while others are excluded and invalidated. This research attempts to understand the different forms through which students, historically underrepresented in the system, combine and balance different discourses when they describe their learning experiences.

I have also used the notion of imagined social capital (Quinn, 2005; 2010) to refer to the different ways that students distinguish the specific spaces of dialogue in which they situate their most significant learning experiences. These spaces of dialogue or, as I call them in this document, learning ecologies, are primarily based on some aspects of the formal educational provision. However, they also connect with other emotional

or cultural elements of the social networks to which students belong. What defines imagined social capital is the potential of these social interactions to increase their motivation and move students forward facilitating retention and achievements.

Finally, I use Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; 2002). This notion refers to the mechanisms that educational institutions use to reproduce social inequalities and the way they are embodied in student practices. Through an analysis of research participants' habitus, I explain how their experiences at school create particular dispositions (practices and perceptions) that influence their perspectives about learning at university.

The dialogical approach and the notions of imagined social capital and habitus define the approach of this research to the experience of student transition. Through these concepts I shift from a notion of transition as a series of stages that pass through a series of milestones or events, to an understanding of transition as a permanent and changing process (Colley, 2010; Quinn, 2010b). This involves analysing transitions from a longitudinal perspective across levels, which prioritises student biographical experiences instead of the focussing on the curricular structures that the system produces to organise knowledge. This also includes a new understanding of attritions and interruptions to study, which are not necessarily perceived as failures but, as previous studies have shown (See for example Thomas & Quinn, 2007), can be considered by students as pathways to personal development and growth.

Learning transitions are therefore understood as a creative process (Quinn, 2010b), a permanent "work" of individuals on their own identity through learning, through which they produce their own personal resources. Learning transitions are not only personal, they are related to generational processes connected at the same time with social experiences. The way through which individuals perceive their learning experience are strongly related to their social belongings. To this extent, it is important to emphasize the importance of collaborative experiences along the process and exploring the influence they have on individual decisions and options. This leads this research to explore an approach to transitions that considers them as strongly

associated with social structures, influenced by the cultural contexts to which individuals belong and by the emotional connections that define their experiences.

Outline of the study

The thesis is set out as follows. In Chapter Two, I explain in more detail the justification for researching in two countries. I describe the background to comparative approaches in education and the aims and reasons for undertaking a comparative study. I also conduct a literature review that describes how both countries have structured the transitions between secondary school and university. I discuss the institutional instruments that are in place to support transitions (learning pathways, qualification system and university access system) and explore key studies and debates about their impact on educational inequalities.

In Chapter Three, I review the studies available about first generation students. I use these studies to underline the main differences between first generation university students and other groups. Secondly, I classify these studies into two groups depending on the theoretical approach that is taken and the topics they address and the predominant methodology. I also identify the gaps that emerge from the analysis of the literature.

In Chapter Four, I outline the theoretical framework that guides this study. In the first section I introduce the dialogical approach, the aspects that distinguish its perspective of social context, identity and discourse. I also introduce the key ideas that underpin a dialogical narrative analysis. In the second section, I discuss the role that the educational system plays in reproducing social inequalities, based on theories of reproduction in education. These theories disclose the hidden mechanisms of the educational system that serve to exclude students who do not possess the cultural capital to be fully immersed in academic codes. Drawing on these theories I discuss the notion of habitus from Bourdieu, and its links with the dialogical approach of Michael Bakhtin. Finally, I present the main concept that has guided my analysis of student experience, the notion of “imagined social capital” (Quinn, 2005; 2010a) and

“learning ecologies” (Matusov, 2009). These concepts are the tools that I use to approach the active and symbolic component of student’s transitions.

Chapter Five presents the methodology of this study. The research takes a critical and dialogical perspective of the learning that takes place during the transition from secondary school to university. To that end, I used photo-elicitation interviews and group interviews as the main ethnographic techniques. In this chapter, I also outline the process of selecting and recruiting participants and describe the different stages of data collection, the process of data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter Six presents the research findings. I explore the strategies that students and their families in Chile and New Zealand use to affect their educational progression in each system. I argue that the Chilean students build “double transitions” to university, combining understanding drawn from both formal and informal learning settings while New Zealand students tend to build their transitions more narrowly within the framework of formal educational institutions.

In Chapter Seven, I explore the predominant narrative position that students use in Chile and New Zealand. I use the concept of chronotopes to discuss biographical continuities when students narrate their learning experiences at school. I show the influence of social segregation within schools on students’ perspectives in each nation. These different perspectives shape the habitus students have in each country, which is a key to understanding students’ transitions after leaving school.

In Chapter Eight, I outline the main kinds of study ecologies, learning ecologies and imagined social capital that students build within the university. These are the forms through which participants took some control over a challenging academic environment. Study ecologies describe the forms through which participants use university places to study. I analyse the connections between study ecologies and the participants’ dispositions towards learning acquired during school times. Imagined social capital is the way through which participants built symbolic bridges between the academic sphere and the social sphere. Learning ecologies are the spatial symbolic places in which imagined social capital is materialised. The chapter identifies clear

differences between the study ecologies that participants built in both countries. However, there was a convergence between both countries with regard to the type of imagined social capital they created. In both New Zealand and Chile, participants found institutional discourses which enabled them to recreate their bonds with their social belonging; these were connected to their social class referents in Chile and their cultural referents in New Zealand.

In Chapter Nine, I discuss the findings through a dialogical analysis of narratives. I associate the structural aspects of transition with the participants' imagined social capital. From a dialogical perspective, the analysis distinguishes the dominant positions that participants take when describing their learning experience. The main difference underlined by the analysis is that participants in New Zealand tended to construct imagined social capital strongly connected with formal institutional spaces, while in Chile imagined social capital tends to be oriented to social places and people to which they belong.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, I summarise the outcomes of the thesis and its implications. I also give some suggestions in regard to how the findings may help to develop policies oriented to support educational transitions.

CHAPTER 2:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHILE AND NEW ZEALAND: PATTERNS OF TRANSITIONS AND SOCIAL INEQUITY

Introduction

Comparative education studies have acquired greater interest since the second half of the twentieth century. For some scholars, comparative education is considered to be a particular discipline with a specific theoretical corpus and its own methodology (Watson, 2001), and for others it has been considered a context that “needs to be conceptualised as part of a more generally conceived interpretative social science perspective” (Broadfoot, 2000, p. 369).

Currently, globalization has increased the relevance of comparative studies, particularly after the implementation of policies implemented across countries (Bologna Plan)³ and the importance of international standardised tests (PISA⁴ and TIMSS,⁵ among others). In the previous chapter I described the interest existing in Chile regarding the New Zealand education system. The main reason for this interest is New Zealand’s results in the PISA test (OECD, 2013d). New Zealand and other “PISA leaders” such as Finland are usually present in debates, conferences, newspaper articles and TV interviews as successful models to be followed.⁶ In Chile, the enthusiasm by authorities to be the first in Latin-America is as intense as the disappointment when the country is compared with other OECD countries.

³ The Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 by Ministers responsible for higher education from 29 European countries. It provides a framework for common efforts to reform and modernize the higher education systems across countries within the European Union (The European Higher Education Area, 2012).

⁴ See Abbreviations.

⁵ See Abbreviations.

⁶ As an example, the New Zealand Embassy and the most important private university, the “Diego Portales” University organised a seminar to discuss the New Zealand Educational system with more than 300 attendees and the presentation of the Chilean and the New Zealander Ministries of Education. One of the most important educational websites published an article about the event called: “New Zealand, close to an educational paradise” in which it underlined the public investment in education, the certification policy, curricular aspects and integration policies of people with disabilities in the New Zealand system (EducarChile, 2014, May 21). Retrieved from www.educarchile.cl/ech/pro/app/detalle?id=185398.

PISA is a product of the OECD, which is an organisation that focuses on economic development not on educational development, such as UNESCO for example. The excessive international interest in these tests worldwide has led to an increased reliance on standardised tests as indisputable proof of educational quality (Academics around the world, 2014). It also has contributed to increasing the devaluation of learning areas which are not included in the test (the test only measures science, mathematics and language). Moreover, the importance awarded to the PISA rankings has opened the gate to “public-private partnership led by multi-national companies which stands to gain financially from any deficit – real or perceived – unearthed by PISA” (Academics around the world, 2014), which creates suspicion about the interests that lies behind the PISA rankings

In Chile, Waissbluth (2013a), one of the prominent figures of the Chilean educational debate, recently published a comparison between Chile and several “successful” countries in international tests amongst which New Zealand was included. He attempted to find the connections between good results in international tests and other aspects of the educational system such as public investments, teacher salaries or school ownership. However, these comparisons are still restricted to the analysis of educational systems as isolated spheres.

As stated earlier, this study approaches learning as an experience that is rooted in the social context where educational systems are located. The PISA test and other international tests have been useful to follow countries’ progress not only in their general achievements but also in the social differences that are expressed in these results. In this study, I take into consideration the leadership that New Zealand has shown in this test for several years and Chile’s progress during the recent years. These aspects are valuable proof of both countries’ progress in specific areas. However, I move away from the predominant over-evaluation of standard tests to understand the educational experience from a wider and locally situated perspective.

In this research, I follow a cultural approach to comparative education (Broadfoot, 2000, 2001; M. Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997; Lauwerys, 1973; Stenhouse, 1967;

Varenne, 2008). These scholars state that the quality and effectiveness of educational systems must be found in the social and cultural context in which they are situated and of which they are a product. At the same time my comparative approach is not based on the positivist goal to find general principles or regularities of educational processes. On the contrary, as Stenhouse (1979) states:

General principles are, with comparative education as within history, not the characteristic products of the study, but rather a means towards the illumination of the particular. (Stenhouse, 1979 as cited in Broadfoot, 2000, p. 361)

Therefore, this research attempts to address one of the main problems that education confronts nowadays; the dialectic conflict between the global and the local (Arnové & Torres, 2007). Comparative education becomes a very important strategy because it attempts to understand the complex relations between macro and micro levels in education systems. It pays attention to the common problems of the global world but in the context of the local and diverse responses to them. As Broadfoot (2001) says, comparative education has a cultural and interpretative tradition that studies the “intangible, impalpable, spiritual and cultural forces which underline an educational system” (Kandel, 1933 as cited in Broadfoot, 2001, p. 90).

I consider that the differences between the New Zealand and Chilean systems are not only explainable by their different levels of economic development. In this study I compare the different social and economic processes of two nations that have similarities and differences. These processes are reflected in a different approach to educational policies, which are expressed in different educational environments, pedagogical approaches and educational outcomes.

The unit of analysis of this study is the interdependence between the social context, the institutional structures of transition and the student perceptions about learning. Therefore, I move from the comparison of isolated pieces of analysis in each system to an integrated and comprehensive comparative approach. I access these interdependent connections through students' narratives. The contextual specificities that these

narratives show enable me to know which structures work more effectively in each country. The narrative analysis is also the key to knowing which structures can be transferred from one system to another and what adaptations and changes must be made to these structures when they are transferred between different contexts.

The reasons for choosing New Zealand and Chile to compare are multiple. New Zealand and Chile share some geographical features. They are both southern countries, located in the same latitude far from the global power centres. Chile has one of the longest international relations with New Zealand in Latin-America and is interested in New Zealand's experience as an innovative economy capable of adding knowledge and research to its exportable products.⁷ There is also an interest in Chile to know more about New Zealand's existing policies with regard to indigenous people.⁸ In regard to the educational field, a bilateral arrangement on education cooperation was signed in 2002. In this context "almost all New Zealand universities and some polytechnics have cooperation agreements in place with counterparts in Chile" (New Zealand Embassy, n.d). In recent times, several students from both countries have travelled across the Pacific to learn English and Spanish or, in the case of the Chilean students, to be trained in the New Zealand farming industry (Universia, 2014). I consider that the internationalisation process of educational processes provides an opportunity for New Zealand and Chile to interchange experiences, create encounters between teachers and learners and open the dialogue about different approaches to education and their contribution to a more democratic and fair society. This research aims to contribute to the development of the connections between both countries located face to face in the southern Pacific Ocean.

In this chapter the comparison of these two countries is firstly situated in historical perspective. I describe the economic reforms that took part in both countries during

⁷ Chile has the longest history of international relations with New Zealand in Latin-America, the New Zealand embassy in Santiago has been operating since 1972. Both countries signed the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership agreement (TPP) in 2005 with Brunei Darussalam and Singapore and a Primary Sector Cooperation agreement. Currently, those cooperation agreements provide New Zealand training to secondary students, farm workers and managers from Chile. (New Zealand Embassy, n.d).

⁸ In 2013, the Chilean Ministry of Economics, came to New Zealand with a Mapuche Indigenous delegation to explore the experience in ethno-tourism management (Gobierno de Chile, 2013).

the 1980s and distinguish their different impacts on the education system. I explain why I consider that, despite the influence of economic neoliberal reforms in both countries, the education system in New Zealand, in comparison to Chile, still considers education as a public good instead of a commodity. After that, particular challenges to achieve higher levels of equity are discussed and the policies and institutional structures of transitions that are responding to them are described. The data show a more consolidated transition policy in New Zealand characterised for a more flexible and smooth transition system than in Chile. New Zealand has also better results in decreasing the gap between different social groups. This analysis forms the basis to understanding the context in which student transitional experiences are situated.

Neoliberal reforms and their impact on inequalities and social segregation between educational institutions in Chile and New Zealand

Impact on the school sector

New Zealand and Chile have had historically different economic and social structures. Chile has historically been a country with significant inequality levels and severe poverty conditions in a significant part of the populations (Espinoza, 1988). In contrast, New Zealand used to be considered one of the most equal societies worldwide since the second world war and during most of the second half of the twentieth century (Rashbroke, 2013).

Despite their historical differences, both countries passed through strong neoliberal reforms during the 1980s, which impacted on their respective social structures. New Zealand and Chile were both considered world laboratories for imposing the Friedman ideology over the economy (Ffrench Davis, 2002; Lauder et al., 1999), which stimulated an extremely open market and reduces state intervention in the economy to a minimum. In both countries, these reforms deregulated the internal

market and opened up the economy to the external market, reduced tariff and trade barriers, weakened the power of unions and privatised government activities in key sectors including social services such as health and pensions.

Despite the changing political circumstances over the last decades, the main features of the neoliberal model have not had significant changes in either country. One of the consequences of these reforms is the sharp increase in wealth concentration. The Gini coefficient⁹ of New Zealand has increased during the last decades and now the country is ranked 20 among 34 OECD countries (Rashbrooke, 2013). Chile in turn, despite having progressed in poverty reduction is currently the most unequal country among the OECD members (OECD, 2013c).

In both countries, education was significantly impacted by these reforms. In Chile, state schools were transferred from central government to local councils and an aggressive process of privatisation of schools started without interruption until now. For-profit schools expanded (Kremerman, Abarca, & Duran, 2009). In New Zealand, after the strong economic reforms, schools were transferred from central government to school boards, removing the layer of administration and making the ministry of education smaller (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Schools in turn, since then, are administered by a “Board of Trustees” composed of parents and staff members, which was expected would give more control to the community over strategic objectives, students’ achievements and resource management, among others (Ministry of Education, 2013b).

The transference of school control from central government to communities or local bodies is one of the characteristics of the educational reform promoted by the “New Right” in the western world (Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Wells, 1997) These policies have been sustained in an anti-bureaucratic discourse. However, they have been accompanied by the introduction of a centralised curricula and national standards which constrain the power of school and transform families and communities into

⁹ “Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution” (Worldbank page, 2014, May 21). Retrieved from data.worldbank.org/indicators/SI.POV.GINI.

“technical instruments of the state’s will” (Halsey et al., 1997). That has tended to be the outcome of educational systems in both Chile and New Zealand some decades after the neoliberal reforms. Studies in both countries show that schools in poorer communities or suburbs tend to lack resources and technical skills to make use of their autonomy, which causes them to lose students in favour of better equipped schools (Sandoval, 2012; Thrupp, 2007; Wylie, 2013).

However, the New Zealand system has resisted the neoliberal forces better than Chile has. To this extent, in comparison to the Chilean education system, education in New Zealand is still considered a public good instead of a commodity. The main expression of this lies in the differences between both countries in the extension of the private sector and in the level of social segregation within schools.

Chile has increased its investment in education which has now reached approximately 4.5% of the Gross National Product (Banco Mundial, 2014a). However, the country has the highest private expenditure in educational institutions in the OECD, reaching more than 30% in schools and more than 70% in tertiary education (OECD, 2013a). This has weakened state institutions at all levels.

In Chile, there are three types of schools; state schools, private-voucher schools and private paid schools. State schools are in crisis. They have reduced their enrolment dramatically to currently below 40% (MINEDUC, 2014). They also experience serious problems in terms of facilities and resources. Private-voucher schools in turn, created during the early 1990s (private institutions which receive state funds and family fees), have steadily increased their enrolments and now hold over 50% of total enrolments (MINEDUC, 2014). Several authors have stated that the expansion of private-voucher schools is the main reason for the increasing social segregation of the Chilean system (Elacqua, 2009; Elacqua, Schneider, & Buckley, 2006; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006). Private-voucher schools are very diverse and socially segmented according to tuition fees, zone and prestige. Private-paid schools (dependant on family fees only) in turn, represent less than 10% of enrolment and receive the wealthiest students exclusively (MINEDUC, 2014).

Teaching and staff members in the Chilean state schooling system have their own regulations (Dirección del Trabajo, Gobierno de Chile, 2014). As a consequence, their salaries and working conditions tend to be worse than in other schools and the possibility for principals to make changes is more restricted. Teacher's salaries have been improving significantly after a dramatic decrease during the 1980s (Kremerman et al., 2009). However, there is still a big gap between salaries in the public and private sectors. Salaries in Chilean state schools are among the lowest in the OECD (OECD, 2013a). Moreover, the ratio of students to teaching staff in state secondary education is the worst after Mexico among the OECD members. This also shows a big gap between public and private owned institutions (OECD, 2013a).

The system is based on school competition. Schools select students from year seven for academic, religious or family income reasons. The main engine of school competition (Waissbluth, 2013b) is the standardized test (SIMCE)¹⁰ the results of which are publically available. The SIMCE test is also the instrument that the state uses to categorise schools within the funding scheme. If schools, despite the government support, do not increase their SIMCE results after a certain number of years they can be closed (Congreso Nacional de la República de Chile, 2008). As a consequence, families consider the SIMCE score when they apply to schools. In their effort to enrol the best students schools skim off the most academically-able and sometimes demand that students hold specific marks to remain at school. This competitive, selective and socially segmented school structure and culture has produced the most socially segregated systems worldwide (OECD data 2011, as cited in Educación 2020, 2013).

The public investment in education in Chile has steadily increased since the 1990s (World Bank, 2014). There is a public subsidy that schools receive according to the number of low income students enrolled (Ministerio de Educacion, 2008). These are probably some of the reasons why Chile is the country with the best score in Latin America in the PISA test. The country has also experienced the sharpest reduction in the social gap in this test during the last years (OECD, 2013d). However, the standardized test (SIMCE) shows a stable gap between schools, which currently

¹⁰ Teaching quality integrated assessment system [Sistema integrado de medición de la calidad de la enseñanza].

reaches 65% between private paid and state secondary schools. Therefore, the structural inequality makes the increasing investment insufficient to reduce the social gap between social groups and schools (Brandt, 2010).

In New Zealand in turn, the state sector is much stronger. The investment in education is higher than in Chile reaching 7.4% of the Gross National Product (Banco Mundial, 2014a). However, the relation between public and private investment is much lower than in Chile, reaching less than 5% in schools and slightly above 30% in tertiary institutions (OECD, 2013a). Therefore, the public sector is still controlling the educational system. More than 80% of students in school attend state institutions (Education Counts, 2014). Other types of schools are “special character” state integrated (usually affiliated to a particular religious or philosophical belief) and are state funded but charge low tuition fees. Private schools in turn represent less than 5% of total enrolment, do not receive any public funds and charge much higher tuition fees. The system categorizes state schools into a decile rating, which is calculated according to the predominant family income (and other socio-economic variables) held by families in the school community. State funding is distributed along a scale in which low decile schools receive the highest amount and high deciles the lowest. This subsidy is clearly oriented to increase equity between the educational provisions for different socioeconomic groups. However, state schools also ask parents for a voluntary donation which creates significant differences between low and high decile schools in regard to resources and facilities.

Generally speaking, the differing school decile ratings and forms of school ownership produce a narrower range of differences between schools than in Chile. Teacher salaries are equal in all school types. The ratio of students to teaching staff (public secondary schools) is much higher than in Chile and it does not differ much between private and state schools (OECD, 2013a).

After the educational reforms during the 1980s, the zoning selection system was eliminated promoting competition between schools. However, it was re-established in 2000 to avoid increasing levels of social segregation (Grace & Thrupp, 2010). Out of zone students are selected through a balloting system. Some authors have criticised the

weak control that the government has over the zoning system, which enables some schools to “bypass deprived closer areas in favour of further wealthier suburbs” (Pearce & Gordon, 2004 as cited in Grace & Thrupp, 2010). Others have claimed that the increasing price of houses within the most prestige school zones also favour middle class students (Thrupp, 2007). However, these are limited deviations in a system based on principles that control competition and favour social integration.

In terms of its results, New Zealand schools have obtained remarkable results in the PISA test, particularly in language and science in which, for several years, it was situated in the first ten places worldwide (OECD, 2013d). In this test, New Zealand has a low variation between schools but a high variation within schools. Thus, the main challenge of the country is to increase the equity between different groups within schools. However, this data demonstrates that schools are socially diverse. Moreover, in this exam the country also has a high number of resilient students¹¹ (OECD, 2013d), i.e., those coming from low income groups with high achievements.

Neoliberal reforms and their impact on universities

Universities in both countries have suffered under the impact of economic neoliberal reforms. The main characteristics are that both Chile and New Zealand tertiary education is increasingly controlled by the market, equalising rules for all institutions without consideration to their ownership, traditions or research production (Kremerman et al., 2009; Smyth & Strathdee, 2010). The principle of subsidy to demand was imposed. According to this principle, the funding to institutions responds to the number of students who demand a programme in any institution, instead of prioritising the funding along other lines, i.e., a permanent funding for institutions according to their teaching quality and research production.

Therefore, New Zealand and Chile are among the countries that consider higher education mainly to be a private investment rather than a social right. The educational

¹¹ Resilient students are those who are situated in the lowest fourth of the cultural, social and economic status index of each country, according to PISA analysis, but obtain results situated in the top fourth of all countries which participate in the test. In this index, New Zealand is in 13th place over 66 while Chile is 39th place. PISA results 2009. www.oecd.org

expansion has not been funded through taxes from the wealthiest groups and big companies but mainly through the tuition fees individuals are charged. Both countries had free universities until the 1970s. However, in the last decades tuition fees have increased persistently.

Chile, although not a rich country, charges the highest tuition fees in the OECD while New Zealand is in sixth place behind Chile, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia (OECD, 2013a). Chile has a per capita income of \$USD 21.466 while New Zealand reaches \$USD 32.926 (Banco Mundial, 2014b), which illustrates how extremely high the tuition fees are in Chile compared with other countries in the OECD.

In both countries, widening education has been achieved through student loan schemes. Both countries are among the group in the OECD which spend the largest part of their public expenditure on education on student loans, grants and allowances. The Chilean system supports a larger percentage of students with grants while New Zealand's scheme is predominantly based on students' loans (Ministerio de Educacion, 2013). New Zealand has a stronger support system than Chile, which includes a student allowance to the poorest groups to cover their living expenditures while they study (Ministry of Social Development, 2013).

In Chile, governments from different political sides have actively promoted private investment in the university sector. As a consequence, since the 1980s more than 30 private universities were created. During the nineties a government agency to regulate these institutions was created but it has been severely criticised inside and outside Chile for being inefficient and weak (OECD, 2013e). State universities in turn have confronted the challenge to compete in new markets without receiving public funds and depending only on students' fees which has resulted in increasing debt (Insunza, 2009; Kremerman et al., 2009).

In New Zealand, all universities have remained under state control. However, the reforms during the eighties allowed non-university institutions to offer bachelor degrees allowing them to compete with universities under the same rules (Smyth &

Strathdee, 2010). Institutions were funded according to the number of students enrolled without making differences between institution types. The democratic relationships within universities weakened and funding was reduced in certain areas which were not so profitable such as humanities and social sciences (Kidman, 2010). Since the late nineties some neoliberal criteria were eliminated and more funding was allocated considering not only the student enrolment number but also their quality and research production. However, state universities and private tertiary institutions still provide similar programmes in bachelor and some postgraduate degrees (Smyth & Strathdee, 2010), competing for students under similar rules.

The data about universities is not sufficient to make conclusions about social segregation between institutions. However, Chile has a more differentiated system with strong competition between institutions. Around 60% of students attend private universities (Brunner, 2009). Working class students coming from state schools tend to constitute a larger group at less prestigious state and private universities (Brunner, 2009). In New Zealand, tuition fees create differences between institutions (Smyth & Strathdee, 2010). However, there are no private universities and each university main campus is based in a specific city. This small and homogeneous university sector controls competition and facilitates conditions for higher levels of social integration within the student body.

In summary, this research compares two countries that are both “products” of strong neoliberal reforms, but demonstrates that the impacts of these economic reforms on the two educational systems have been different. These differences are mainly expressed in the process of privatisation, the influence of the market and the different levels of social segregation between school and university institutions. The Chilean educational system is regarded as one of the most segregated in the world (OECD data 2011 as cited in Educación 2020, 2013) while the New Zealand educational system has lower social segregation levels within schools (S. Jenkins, Micklewright, & Sylke, 2008).

This review of the educational systems suggests that there are two aspects of the social context that influence learning transitions. Firstly, the impact of school social

integration is something that has been widely studied and there is evidence of its positive outcomes in increasing achievements and expectations, particularly for socially disadvantaged students (Coleman et al., 1966; Henderson, Miezowski, & Sauvageau, 1978; Summers & Wolfe, 1977; Zimmer & Toma, 2000). Thus, one of the questions that this research expects to respond to relates to the influence of peer and social relationships on student progression from school to university.

Secondly, the educational experiences of students are situated in a broader context characterised by struggles and tensions between different social groups. Students' perspectives of learning not only show the position in which students situate themselves in relation to other people within school, but also their position in regard to the different social forces that act within the wider educational system as an expression of the broad social structure. The main conflict between different social groups is reflected in the differentiation of institutions in the school and university sectors and is mainly expressed in the influence of market rules over education. Despite both countries having similar economic trends, the impact of these forces on them has been different. The narrative analysis undertaken in this research considers that student narratives would reflect these differences and would distinguish the role that these differences have on student progression to university.

In the next section, I shift from the analysis of the wider social structure to the structures of transitions and the temporal dimensions of students' experiences. I analyse these educational structures in both countries identifying the ways in which they contribute to the level of equity in both societies. The main opportunities and barriers that students, particularly working class or other under-represented students find along the way are described. The section also presents the main debates that have emerged around these structures and the proposed changes that are expected to be made to increase equity between different social groups.

Transition structures and educational inequalities in New Zealand and Chile

Defining smooth educational transitions

In 2000, the OECD (2000) undertook a cross-national study about transition policies and concluded that successful educational transition systems have different structures but all of them show clear pathways with flexibility for students to shift and find diverse options according to their interests. Such systems can be divided into two groups. First, those that created National Certification Systems which are based on the achievement of certain learning levels in their progression to tertiary studies, instead of requiring students to graduate from school upon a final exam (England and New Zealand, for example). Secondly, the OECD also found that institutions that innovate their learning and teaching strategies and design approaches which promote student autonomy and initiative with regard to their own learning resulted in more successful transitions. This includes reinforcing learning through applied activities and opening wider opportunities for decision-making. The report concluded that public policies designed to create smooth educational transitions should combine both aspects.

In light of widening educational access, one significant change in recent years has been the revision of the role of secondary education (See for example Hoffman et al., 2007). Considered in the past as the final stage of education for most students, secondary school is now seen instead as a transitional site that prepares young people for tertiary studies. Some have demanded that secondary schools become increasingly differentiated from primary school in order to increase their connections and identity with universities and other tertiary institutions to facilitate transitions (Conley, 2007; Hoffman, 2007; Tedesco, 2001).

Secondary school plays an important role in reproducing or overcoming social differences. During the twentieth century, some countries chose a comprehensive

curriculum and others formed an early division between vocational and academic pathways. McKenzie refers to these models as “loosely coupled” and “tightly connected” (1998 as cited in OECD, 2000, p.29). Studies show that tightly connected systems obligate students and their families to make early decisions with regard to their futures which tend to lead them to similar employment areas to their parents, thus reproducing the social division of labour at an early stage (Dupriez et al., 2008; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2006). In contrast, loosely coupled models are more effective in widening the opportunities of working class students (OECD, 2000). However, systems that integrate all students in only one curriculum use other more subtle forms to reproduce segregation such as the streaming system (Higgins et al., 2008). These systems also face the challenge of supporting students to use all the options available at school, according with their interests (Higgins et al., 2008).

A smooth transition system is one that guarantees fair educational opportunities for all students from early childhood education. This is possible if all schools (beyond their ownership model and pedagogical approach) guarantee similar academic conditions for all students and do not select students according to academic results. Due to the class-based curriculum which many argue exists at school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bernstein, 1975), academic achievements tend to be strongly influenced by the family social background which means that selecting according to academic merits in the early years, reproduce social differences. Hence, academic selection creates social selection at school. Accordingly, segregated schools reduce the “educational peer effect” (Zimmer & Toma, 2000) i.e., the encounter between students from different backgrounds learning from each other, compensating to some extent for the inequalities between different social groups.

Smooth transition systems also have strong career guidance services throughout education, but particularly in secondary schools. These services have to be based on student diversity (OECD, 2000). Schools must also value and diversify career options and learning areas in a similar way, however, to achieve this, it is necessary to bring about significant changes in labour and salary structures. However, from the educational field, it is necessary to promote a pedagogic culture which values different learning areas equally (Science, Humanities, Arts, Sport, Vocational and Academic).

Smooth transitions also help students in their progression to higher qualifications through a qualification system that facilitates shifting qualifications, as well as widening opportunities for people to move between different types of qualifications, learning and occupational sectors. A National Qualification System is one of the instruments that has been applied to achieve that (Young, 2003). Such systems enable students to move smoothly from lower qualifications to higher qualifications and they promote the recognition of informal learning in formal institutions (Young, 2003). Both aspects create alternative routes for tertiary studies which favour working class students to achieve their educational expectations (OECD, 2000).

With regard to universities, a smooth transition system includes a university access system which connects the educational provision at school with the demands of the university to provide fair opportunities to students from non-academic families to access universities (OECD, 2000). Universities that offer support programmes that create appropriate pedagogical and pastoral support according to student heterogeneity (Thomas & Quinn, 2010; Yorke & Thomas, 2010) also support smooth transitions. Universities that offer affirmative action programmes which facilitate the access of socially excluded groups to the university under special accessing conditions also create smoother pathways for such students (Thomas & Quinn, 2010).

Finally, smooth transition systems also support students to access and manage the financial aid system (in countries where students pay fees) (York & Thomas, 2010), enabling them to progress in their studies and offering flexible options to pay back their loan after leaving university. A system that accomplishes these characteristics will favour fair opportunities for different students to access and succeed at university.

In the following section, I review the main findings of studies in Chile and New Zealand which have researched the relationship between the structures of transitions and equity in access and retention at university. I focus on the institutional barriers that working class first generation university students can find during their transition to university and the strategies both countries use to reduce these barriers.

The structure of transitions in New Zealand

New Zealand's educational system has some elements that are important to build smooth transitions between school and tertiary education. In terms of the secondary school curriculum, New Zealand decided in 1970 to implement one comprehensive curriculum in secondary school that prioritized the opportunities for students to choose a learning route that matched their post-secondary education interests (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Thus, similarly to the United States, England and Canada, this loosely coupled system has reduced differences between vocational and academic education. It has also offered students the same basic education and widens their post-secondary school choices.

However, a number of barriers still exist relating to educational transitions, and in 2000, the New Zealand government declared that educational transitions were a public priority (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005). The national budget has assigned funds to agencies linked to the topic and to coordinate different instances related to the support for students during their transitions from school and tertiary education (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005).

For example, New Zealand government funded programmes such as the "Youth Guarantee" (Ministry of Education, 2013a), "Gateway Programme" (Tertiary Education Commission, 2013), and "Star" (Ministry of Education, 2013c) have been created to provide young students with more incentives to persist with secondary school, to widen their opportunities and choices and to strengthen the connection between school, industry and tertiary providers. These programmes are mainly focused on vocational education with restricted initiatives to support students who want to follow university programmes.

Other programmes, such as Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success (Ministry of education, 2008) – aim to improve access to tertiary education and university for Māori students. This programme has actions to increase the number of Māori teachers, strengthen Māori perspectives in the curriculum, develop professional improvement for Māori

student engagement and reinforce school services to support Māori students, among other actions.

As part of this policy, New Zealand has implemented the National Certification System, which articulates secondary education and tertiary studies qualifications. The current system implemented in schools is called National Certification of Educational Achievements (NCEA) and it was created with the goal to make evaluations more adequate to the new demands of the labour market and increasing diversity of secondary school students (Openshaw, 2005). According to Openshaw (2005) this attempted to create a new assessment approach that:

Break down required knowledge into smaller, more readily digested components, that would give those who were most disadvantaged by traditional assessment procedures more chance of succeeding academically (Openshaw, 2005, p. 247).

This system evaluates students according to “learning standards” (New Zealand Qualification Authority, 2014) in each subject. When students achieve standards they obtain credits that lead to the accomplishment of different NCEA levels. Credits obtained in schools can be transferred to the New Zealand Qualification Framework, which is comprised of more than 700 qualifications at tertiary level and community education. Progress in school does not require a pass from one year to another, but instead, students need to get the right number of credits at the approved level. This gives students a certain level of flexibility to progress according to their individual rhythm and choices. During the first year of secondary education, students have a common curriculum and from year 11 they progressively have a wider number of optional subjects and fewer compulsory subjects until year 13, when most schools only have English as a compulsory subject.

New Zealand does not have a standardised access test to select students for university. The access depends on the learning level and credits that students achieve during school. To enrol at the university they have to obtain the credits needed to reach “University Entrance Level” (UE), which combines a number of credits in level three,

some credits in maths and language and specific credits in “approved subjects” defined by each university programme.

This certification system is based on a flexible and autonomous pattern that is continued at university. The Bachelor degree takes in most cases three years and students can choose majors or minors according to their planning and career interests. There is also the option to follow conjoint degrees and access to an honours level before master level, all of which widen future career options in the future.

Moreover, there is a system of credit transfer and certification recognition (NZQA, 2002) that enables students to obtain recognition for their previous learning in some institutions (in different educational levels within formal or informal education). This system also helps students to transfer credits between institutions which increases the learning routes available, particularly for those who interrupt, abandon or fail at some stage.

Educational transitions of working class students in New Zealand has a wide tertiary education coverage with 50% of young people under 25 years of age accessing type “A” tertiary programmes (three to five year bachelor programmes), which is over the OECD average (OECD, 2013b). Moreover, the graduating level among national students is also above the OECD average (OECD, 2013b). Around 80% of students graduate from a programme equivalent or superior, after eight years from the time of their first enrolment. However, the country still has a challenge of reducing the gap between different ethnicities and school deciles. The gap between minority groups and school deciles is persistent: in 2011, of students leaving school 25.5% of Māori attained university entrance level, whereas 52.2 % were of European descent (Education Counts, 2013b). There is also a big gap between school deciles; in 2011, 75.3% of students who reached Level 3 in year 13 were from decile 10 schools, whereas only 29.7% were from decile 1 schools (Education counts, 2013c).

However, since the implementation of the National Certification System in 2002 in schools, the data show an increasing number of Māori and Pacific students coming from low income schools achieving the first three NCEA levels. At the same time, the

gap between Māori and European students obtaining level 2 was significantly reduced (Turner, Irving, Li, & Yuan, 2010). There has also been a slight reduction in the gap between different ethnic groups accessing University Entrance Level in NCEA (Education Counts, 2013a).

Studies in New Zealand support an admission system based on school achievements. They conclude that the results in secondary school are a good predictor of the choices that students take in tertiary education (U. Scott, 2008). Students that have good results in school also tend to gain good results at university during the first years and show higher levels of retention and completion than other students (Engler, 2010a; Loader & Dalgety, 2006; D. Scott & Smart, 2005; U. Scott, 2008).

Engler (2010b) compared the results of first year university students who had come from different school deciles and obtained a small but statistically significant gap between low and high decile students. The same study detected one unusual datum; some students with good results in school who come from low decile schools present better results in first year university than students with similar results coming from high decile schools. Engel's hypothesis is that high decile schools tend to overvalue their students' skills. Accordingly, Engels (2010b) suggested that universities do not increase their UE level because this could damage students coming from low decile schools who have showed their capacity to achieve better than their peers at university although they have lower results at school.

The evaluations that have been made of the NCEA qualification system have generally been positive. Teachers and students value the system for the flexibility and autonomy it offers to student decisions (Madjar et al., 2009; Meyer, Kirsty, McClure, Walkey, & McKenzie, 2009). They also value the clear expectations that the system gives students in terms of the contents to be assessed and what is expected from each evaluation (Alison, 2005). Students also like to have two different assessment systems, internal and external, because the first one provides more flexibility, giving them a "trial or error" (Meyer et al., 2009, p. 12) method which contributes to their self-confidence and increases their desire to improve. Internal exams also provide opportunities to get credits without confronting the stress that external evaluations can

have at the end of the year (Allison, 2005). The perception of teachers and students in schools when comparing NCEA with the old system underlines that the system has a positive impact on student motivation and this is particularly high in working class students, Māori and Pacific (Allison, 2005).

However, parents who were in school when the old system functioned or who have had no secondary experience, lack an understanding of the NCEA system to help students in their decisions (Turner et al., 2010). It is quite common for students with academic ability to choose vocational courses (sport, recreation, hospitality, etc.) because they provide a larger number of credits that are easy to access (Madjar et al., 2009). However, these credits are not the most useful when applying for university. If they choose to apply for university in year 12 or 13, they experience difficulties completing the credits in the areas demanded by university programmes (Madjar et al., 2009).

Schools can influence students in different ways through either supporting them in their planning to undertake post-secondary education or creating some barriers to their future projections. Alison (n.d.) stated that career advisors play an important role in guiding student future projections and supporting them in the areas required by universities. Turner et al. (2010) showed that one of the key factors to facilitate some Māori and Pacific students' progression to university is the availability of a wide range of achievement standards at school. However, some low decile schools lack some facilities or resources to offer students a wide range of subject options, thus restricting their opportunities for students to get credits in their preferred area (Madjar et al., 2009). This can be exacerbated further as schools determine how many credits are available to students in any given subject, which can lead students to make inappropriate choices (Madjar et al., 2009). In some cases, teachers can make an "implicit selection" guiding some high achievers to take the right standards while ignoring other students who also have university expectations (Turner et al., 2010).

Another critical issue is the consistency of school demands and university programme demands. Some universities, during the last years have introduced changes to their admission criteria making it difficult for schools to give an effective orientation to

students about selecting approved subjects (Alison, 2005). The wide range of choices and the combination of diverse courses and credits demanded by different programmes and universities make the system very complex, particularly for families without secondary school or university experience (most of them Māori, Pacific and low income) who tend to have a lower level of understanding of the system (Turner et al., 2010; Madjar et al., 2009).

As a way of managing these problems, some proposals have been developed to change the formula to obtain University Entrance level (Turner, Li, & Yuan, 2010). These have been tested and applied to a small sample of schools. The goal is to create assessment tools that are more consistent with the way working class, Māori and Pacific students select their subjects. For example, they have proposed to favour students who get credits in a restricted number of learning areas (commonly sport, arts and language) which is what many socially disadvantaged students tend to study.

One significant support structure within universities are “Student Learning Support” programmes. According to one study (Manalo, Marshall, & Fraser, 2010), between 15-20% of students at university have used such support services. Students are supported through learning skills workshops, support programmes associated with specific disciplines, peer support and foundation skills courses such as English as a second language, support to students at risk of attrition and support focused on minority groups, among others.

There are university programmes which attempt to increase the number of underrepresented groups, mainly Māori and Pacific groups. Some schools within different universities offer special support to these students through culturally pertinent programmes, such as “Awhina” (Wilson et al., 2011) at Victoria University. This programme focuses on “Whanau” (extended family) involvement in student progression (Wilson et al., 2011).

Other schools (such as law and medicine) in different universities have implemented “affirmative action” policies which create “Special Entry Quotas” for Māori and Pacific students (Sadler, 2005). However, they are restricted to certain schools such as

medicine and law which are particularly sensitive to cultural differences. Some also include special culturally-based tutorials to support these students during their studies (Sadler, 2005).

In summary, the certification system, which connects secondary and tertiary qualifications in New Zealand is a key contributor to the structure of transitions. The studies reviewed in this section show that the NCEA system is able to build a transitional pattern that, in comparison with the old structure has shown positive results in supporting working class, Māori and Pacific students in their retention and achievements. This is a system focused on promoting the autonomy of students when choosing their interests, providing learning areas and pathways to achieve their future goals. The studies also showed that the system has a positive impact on student motivation also in high achievers and low achievers and is, in general, valued by families.

The adjustments that have been proposed are not designed to change NCEA's structure. These have tried to increase the consistency between the system and the way socially and ethnic disadvantaged students have selected subjects until now. In other cases, these changes expect to solve the lack of understanding that working class and Māori and Pacific students have of the system. It is expected that changes at this level will support the system to decrease the persistent gap between different social groups when enrolling in the university. At the university, beyond some isolated affirmative action initiatives with working class first generation students, this group is not directly targeted in the most important programmes. Student Learning Support Offices in turn have some programmes focused on supporting under-represented groups, especially Māori and Pacific groups.

Structures of transitions in Chile

The Chilean educational system does not support educational transitions as an important area of its public policies. Schools' learning pathways have shown few variations since the 1960s. Students have to choose between technical and scientific-humanistic (academic) schools in year 8, when they usually are 13 years of age.

Vocational (technical) schools have been historically conceived to prepare students for the working field and vocational post-secondary education while scientific-humanistic schools were conceived to prepare students for university. They can choose different “specialities” (in vocational education) and three different “modalities” (in scientific-humanistic schools).

The requirement to enrol in tertiary studies is the secondary school certificate which is obtained when the last secondary school year is approved. Students who want to apply to the university have to pass through a Standard Admission Test. The main component of the system is the Selection Test to the University (PSU in Spanish). The PSU is a standardized test nationally applied since 2003 and is composed of:

- a) Two main tests of language and maths.

- b) Two selective tests: History and social sciences and science (biology, chemistry and physics).

The system also includes the average of secondary school marks that are weighted with the test score. In 2013 the system included a percentage (bonus) associated with the ranking of students’ marks within their school.

Although the university system is extremely heterogeneous, the curriculum in general maintains a structured model. Chilean universities have a professionalized and extended curriculum which in most cases take five years to complete (Armanet, 2005). In most universities, there are few options to shift programmes or to combine different programmes and certifications (Armanet, 2005; Brunner & Ferrada, 2011; OECD, 2013e).

The country does not have a national certification system which means that each level has its own assessment system. As a consequence, the possibilities to transfer certifications between levels or institutions are restricted and informal learning is not recognized in the formal system.

Structures of transitions and working class students in Chile

In recent years Chile has widened access across all levels: currently secondary school access is over the OECD average and tertiary education access is slightly below the OECD average (OECD, 2013b). Currently, 33% of young people between 18 and 24 years old attend a tertiary education institution (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2013). The expectations of completing tertiary education has increased dramatically among students, families and teachers of public schools during the last decade (Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo de la Educación. CIDE, 2002, 2014).

However, Chile has one of the Latino-American countries with the largest social gaps with regard to accessing universities (Garcia de fanelli & Jacinto, 2010). The difference between the first decile and the last decile reached 63.9% in 2013 (Ministerio de desarrollo social, 2013). At the same time, students' attrition rates at university are high: 22.5% of students drop out their programmes during their first years (MINEDUC, 2010) and 40% in the third year (Microdatos, 2008). Levels of retention and graduation are high among students who come from private schools and for those in the most prestigious universities and lower among those who come from public or semi-private school and who attend less prestigious universities (OECD, 2013e).

There are several aspects in the structure of transitions that allow working class students to successfully complete their transition process towards universities. However, in the current system, many working class students still leave secondary school early after confronting some critical milestones, which damage their ability to work towards their interests and follow further studies (Gysling & Hott, 2010).

One of the most serious problems is that the institutional structure does not fit the curricular structure in Chile (Gysling & Hott, 2010). Secondary school starts at Year 9 but the division between vocational and scientific-humanistic curriculum starts in Year 11. Therefore, both vocational and scientific-humanistic schools have the same

curriculum in Years 9 and 10 and a different curriculum in Years 11 and 12. This is a disadvantage for those coming from low income schools. Private schools integrate primary and secondary education all the way through from Year 1 to Year 12, but state schools and some private voucher schools (usually in poor zones) split primary and secondary into two different institutions. Therefore, if these students choose a vocational secondary school but later decide they want to study at the university, they have to shift from their school again to a scientific-humanistic school to be well prepared to the Admission Test. For many students, it is difficult to make this decision because they have to break up their existing social networks and sometimes they do not have such schools available close to home (Gysling & Hott, 2010). However, studies show that more than 60% of students who finish technical schools sit the university Admission Test (MINEDUC, 2013b). Considering that, in 2013, the government decided to eliminate the contents of the test that were not included in the technical school curriculum. However, vocational schools still face the challenge to respond to the university expectations of many of their students with a rigorous pedagogical approach (Valverde, 2009).

On the other hand, students have to take a large number of subjects during the last years of secondary school; some of them are optional, others are compulsory. They also need to attend pre-university institutions to prepare for the Admission Test (if they can afford it). This demanding workload is particularly difficult for working class students who usually have other family commitments and need to make an extra effort to achieve the same entry levels as other students with greater educational capital (Gysling & Hott, 2010).

The critical event in which inequalities become most evident is the Admission system to the university. The PSU test replaced the Academic Aptitude Test (PAA in Spanish) in 2003 with the explicit goal of reducing the gap between social groups who want to access university (Koljatic & Silva, 2010; MINEDUC, 2013b). It was considered that it would improve the success rates of working class students because it was deemed to be fairer, measuring contents rather than aptitudes. It was also expected that measuring contents would also improve educational quality in all schools and would reduce the significance of pre-university paid institutions which

prepare students for the Admission Test. However, after some years of implementation, the results have been the opposite. The gap between social groups has increased and the number of working class students enrolling in the most prestigious universities has decreased (MINEDUC, 2013a). One critical issue is that this gap is also evident when the upper third of high achievers in different schools are compared, which indicates that the good results of students from low income schools are not recognized in the Admission system (Koljatic & Silva, 2010). Thus, the test has not been able to promote quality education and curriculum implementation improvement in all schools. Likewise, teachers “steal” hours of classes to prepare students for the test (MINEDUC, 2013b). Most pre-university institutions are private and for-profit, which damages the opportunities of students who cannot afford them.

The admission instrument presents other problems that increase the existing inequalities. The inclusion of secondary school marks as a selective criterion benefits students from private schools whose school marks, similarly to New Zealand, tend to be amplified in comparison to other schools (Contreras, Gallegos, & Meneses, 2009). The system lacks a criterion to define the comparability of the average marks between different schools that are very different in terms of ownership, social composition and resources (MINEDUC, 2013b). The “Pearson Report” (MINEDUC, 2013c), requested by the last government to evaluate the PSU Test suggested including the school marks average in the Admission system, creating external exams implemented across schools.

During the last couple of years, several universities have implemented “affirmative action” initiatives oriented to widen the access of low income schools using alternative admission systems. Some of them selected students with the best marks in low income schools and enrolled them in special transition programmes without requiring them to have a specific score in the entrance test (Gil & Bach, n.d.). The assessments of these initiatives showed that students who access university this way have positive academic outcomes, particularly after the second year and have similar levels of retention to their peers (Contreras et al., 2009; Koljatic & Silva, 2010).

Considering the success of these programmes, the ‘Vice-chancellor Council’¹² decided to include the ranking or “bonus” for secondary school marks. This bonus give students a score according to the relation of the average marks obtained in secondary school with the average of the last three generations graduating from the same school (MINEDUC, 2013a). The impact of this criterion is under debate. Studies from the Ministry of Education showed that it slightly favoured private schools and it has no impact in increasing the number of low income applicants for the best universities (MINEDUC, 2013a).

At the same time, studies have different results with regard to the potential of the PSU test to predict the outcomes in university. For example, Manzi, Bravo and Del Pino (2008) have stated that the test shows more predictive potential than the last test (PAA). The Pearson report (MINEDUC, 2013), in turn, undertook its own study and detected that the test has predictive potential but it is lower than other tests in the international context. Contreras et. al (2009) instead, considered that the test does not have predictive potential and can even be fallacious in predicting student results in tertiary studies. This can be a serious problem because many grants and allowances offered by the government to working class students are based on the PSU test score (Koljatic & Silva, 2010).

One of the explanations of these problems of predictability is the low continuity between what is assessed in the test and the academic requirements during the first years of university programmes. With regard to this, Koljatic and Silva (2010) propose a shift from a test that measures universal contents for all students to a new one with reduced content, which gives equal opportunities for success for all students and with a higher predictability.

The studies that compare the predictive comparability of the PSU test with other instruments used in the Admission System underline the higher predictive potential of the ranking in secondary school and its greater potential to make the system more equal (Contreras et al., 2009; MINEDUC, 2013b). In 2013, new changes were

¹² The Vice chancellor council join all the “traditional” universities. These are the oldest and most prestigious universities in the country, which include state universities, some privates and the catholic university.

introduced in the system particularly designed to make them more equal. The way to calculate the weight of the secondary school marks was adjusted and the “bonus” given the secondary school ranking increased.

With regard to universities, Chile does not have a consolidated system to support students during their university educational progression. Tertiary institutions and universities used to have a “Student support office” but these are predominantly focused on pastoral support, designed to provide advice in financial issues, health or recreation but not an academic focus. Some universities offer programmes which include specific tutorials, complementary courses and learning skills workshops, which are more common in private universities than state ones (Microdatos, 2008). However, these programmes are not sustained in a consolidated strategy designed to support students at risk of attrition. They attempt to create basic conditions for students to manage the university system applied to a generic student profile (Microdatos, 2008).

In summary, the Chilean school system presents a significant number of barriers for working class student progression to the university. These are related to the institutional and curricular structure. The admission system has been ineffective in reducing the gap between different social groups. However, the previous governments and the universities (most traditional ones) are creating new strategies to change the university admission system attempting to achieve higher equity levels. Some universities also have developed programmes to support students in their study progression during the first years although they do not target specific groups. The policies all across the system are focused on supporting low income students but first generation university students are not targeted as a specific group.

This section has compared both New Zealand and Chile’s educational transition system and has revealed that New Zealand provides a more effective model than Chile whose system shows lower levels of flexibility, student autonomy and stable supporting structures. Both countries however still face the challenge of reducing the gap between different social groups. The Chilean system has been less effective in reducing this gap. However, both structures have barriers and opportunities to increase

underrepresented groups' participation. My research focuses on understanding these barriers and opportunities in greater depth from students' perspectives. As stated in the research questions, I will describe the people and learning sites in each transition system that play a more significant role supporting students in their pathway to the university. The strategies that students use to overcome the barriers that each transition system put on their pathway will also be described.

In the next chapter I discuss studies that have focused on first generation students. I categorise them into two groups and analyse their contributions and identify their limitations. Following this, I present in Chapter Four my theoretical approach to the analysis of the narratives of first generation students in both countries.

CHAPTER 3:

STUDIES ABOUT FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on the social context and the structure of transition in both countries. I referred mainly to the generic term of new students in the system or working class students. In this chapter I provide an overview of the studies specifically focused on first generation students. These studies show that parents' education has a particular influence on students' transition to university, among students coming from different ethnicities, social classes and ages. I categorise and explain the main contribution of each approach to study the transition of first generation university students. I identify the weaknesses of some approaches and, finally, I explain why the narrative studies of the first generation student experiences are an appropriate way to understand the complex relationship between students and institutions throughout their transition.

There are diverse ways of labelling the new group of students who have come to the university over the past decades. Probably, the most common is the term "non-traditional students" (See for example, Bowl, 2003; Kim, Sax, Lee, & Hagedorn, 2010; Schuetza & Slowey, 2002). In most countries the research has focused on the income of these students being the most important influence on their pathway to the university. This has been the case in England (See for example, Reay, 1998; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009a, 2009b) and Latin America (See for example Canales & De los Rios, 2007, 2009; Carrasco, Zuñiga, & Espinoza, 2014; Jimenez & Lagos, 2011; Reynaga, 2011). In New Zealand, the focus of research has been the ethnic differences between groups and their influence on student access to and involvement in the university (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006; Wilson, et al., 2011).

The central focus of this study was the parental education level. Therefore I excluded in this review studies that prioritize factors such as social class and ethnicity as the main

ones to understand students' transition to the university. Only in the US has, the influence of parent education been an important focus of research over the past decades. This is confirmed in two of the most important comparative reviews of research on this topic. Thomas and Quinn (2007), who published one of the most comprehensive and broad comparative studies about first generation entry to university, stated that "only literature from the US refers explicitly to first generation entrants in higher education" (p. 48). A more recent review (Splieger & Bednarek, 2013) also stated that "the bulk" (p. 319) of these studies comes from the US.

These studies in the US provide a consistent corpus of research in which it is possible to identify the main theoretical and methodological approaches and debates around the experience of these students. The numerous studies in the US about first generation students also give a broad perspective about the reciprocal influences between parental education and other aspects of students' biography such as social class and ethnicity. However, they keep the focus on parent educational level as the main factor under analysis.

The literature about first generation students in Chile and New Zealand¹³ is almost non-existent. In this chapter, I include one study about the topic in Chile (Castillo & Cabezas, 2010) and two studies from Australia (Luczeckyj, Scutter, King, & Brinkworth, 2011, O' Shea, 2014).

Most of the studies about first generation students focus on understanding student integration in the academic environment and the influence of integration on their academic outcomes at university. They have provided valuable data which show that the experience and educational outcomes of first generation students and non-first generation students tend to be different, in both school and university. These studies also suggest these differences are influenced by the way that educational institutions treat first generation students.

¹³ During the research process I did not find any study about first generation students in New Zealand and there were only two studies published in Chile (Castillo & Cabezas, 2010; Concha, 2009). I excluded the second one from this review because it addresses students' perception about social mobility in rural areas, which is not a perspective that contribute to this research. In New Zealand, the only scholar I meet researching in the field was a PhD student from Auckland University who was undertaking a study about first generation students in PhD programmes.

There have been some attempts to organize the existing studies about first generation students. These attempts classify the studies according to the topic and period of time of the educational transitions: during school, within the transition period or during university (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). However, these categories refer to those studies undertaken before the first years of 2000. In the following section, I include more recent studies and I identify two main groups according to their theoretical and methodological approach and the problem on which they focused.

The first category of literature consists of quantitative studies about the experience of first generation university students at different stages of the school-university transition and their outcomes in access, retention, attainment and cognitive development (Chen & Carrol, 2005; Choy, 2001; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Inman & Mayes, 1999; Ishitani, 2006; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; Terenzini et al., 1996; Woosley & Shepler, 2011). Most of these studies are influenced by an interactional approach to student persistence at university (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1987,1997, 1998). Some of these studies use a longitudinal approach to analyse the main factors that influence students' progression between school and university (Chen & Carrol, 2005; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Ishitani, 2006; Choy, 2001).

The second category of literature consists of studies about the cultural challenges that first generation students confront at university (Lara, 1992; London, 1989, 1992; Orbe, 2004; Rendon, 1992; Rodriguez, 1975; Stuber, 2011; Weis, 1992). These studies use qualitative or biographical and auto-biographical approaches and they focus on student perceptions. They show the influence of cultural belonging (family, ethnicity, and social class) on the way in which students participate within the academic environment.

First category: Correlations between student integration and academic outcomes

Several of the studies in the first category compare the situation of first generation students and non-first generation students within their educational transitions. Some of these studies provide a perspective about students' educational transitions within the university (Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998) or from school to university (Choy, 2001) while another group focus on first generation university students' experiences at high school (Chen & Carrol, 2005).

These studies make it clear that the educational transitions of first and non-first generation students differ in terms of expectations, decisions and academic outcomes. There are differences between both groups at all stages of the transition between secondary school to university. Firstly, lower parental educational levels are associated with social groups traditionally excluded from education. The majority of first generation university students in the United States tend to come from non-white ethnic groups (Terenzini, et al., 1996). They also tend to be older than other students, are more likely than others to be in the lowest income quartile and are more likely to enrol in community colleges (Choy, 2001).¹⁴ When the transition to university is compared with other students whose parents have higher education, the gap between the outcomes of both groups is visible from secondary school. High school first generation university student graduates report “lower educational expectations (as early as 8th grade), be[ing] less prepared academically, and receiv[ing] less support from their families in planning and preparing for college” (Choy, 2001, p. 12).

These differences are not only explained from the university context. Ishitani (2006) states that one of the most important aspects that influences early attrition of first generation university students are high school attributes. According to his study, during

¹⁴ Higher education in United States includes Two-year colleges (most of the times called “community colleges”) and four-year colleges (called “Colleges”) which offer a greater range of studies than two-year colleges. Two years college offer the associate's degree such as an Associate of Arts (A.A.). Community colleges often have open admissions and lower tuition than other state or private schools. They are primarily undergraduate institutions. Four years colleges offer bachelor's degree, such as the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.). Many students start in Two-year College and transfer to four year institutions to earn a bachelor's degree. Higher education in United States. Retrieved from www.wikipedia.org.

high school, most first generation university students avoid choosing more academically demanding subjects and those which most help them to reach university. However, institutions can make a difference. If schools support students in their academic expectations and progress through using a rigorous curriculum, first generation students improve their future expectations and the achievement gap between them and other students notably decreases (Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Ishitani, 2006). Similarly, one study undertaken in Australia (Luczecky, Scutter, King & Brinkworthwhich, 2011) which compared “first in family”¹⁵ students with “non-first in family” also highlighted that secondary school support (school teachers, career advisors, university recruiting material and websites) were the most important aspect in helping first in family students to follow university study.

Leaving school is another key milestone that increases the gap between first and non-first generation students. The studies conclude that a student’s decision about their future college is the moment when parent educational level exerts its greatest influence. As Pascarella et al. (2004) states:

If one had a large group of high-school graduates who were identical (insofar as measured in this study) in their race/ethnicity and parents’ economic circumstances; their reading, critical thinking, and math skills; their high-school performance; their educational aspirations; and their academic motivation, despite all those similarities, the students in that group whose parents had never been to college would be more likely to attend less selective institutions than their peers whose parents both held a bachelor’s degree or higher. (p. 276)

According to Riehl (1994, cited in Woosley & Shepler, 2011), the low expectation that first generation students show in secondary school persists when they confront exams at university. Riehl suggests that this is linked to first generation students’ higher uncertainty with regard to their own skills when compared with other groups. This also

¹⁵ In Australia as it is in New Zealand, “first in families” students are those whose family members have never attended any sort of university studies (Luczecky, et al., 2011).

influences the subjects they choose on entering college. They are less likely to take courses in the humanities and fine arts and tend to complete fewer hours of study during the first academic year (Terenzini et al., 1996; Pascarella et al., 2004). They are also less likely to participate in an honours programme (Terenzini et al., 1996) and tend to get less credits from their studies and present lower result averages (Chen & Carrol, 2005).

In this context, as stated in Chapter Two, to analyse transitions it is necessary to have a longitudinal perspective of the educational system. It is also important to consider the diverse institutions that play an intermediate role in the transition to university. In the United States, many first generation students have their first college experience in “community colleges” which are usually located close to their homes and where they meet students with shared social backgrounds (R. Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Willet, 1989). If they achieve well there, they may strengthen their self-confidence and increase their educational expectation to apply to four year college degree programmes.

With regard to college retention and graduation, first generation university students are less likely than non-first generation university students to remain enrolled after three years and to graduate (NCES, 2001). Ishitani (2006) concludes that even considering factors like gender, ethnicity and income, first generation university students from United States’ universities (until second year) had 8.5 times more probability of dropping out before finishing than their peers with parents with university experience. Therefore, the greatest rate of attrition occurs during the first years. After this, those who have the resilience to remain in study show fewer differences from their peers. After three years, first generation students are as likely as others to successfully complete their degrees (Choy, 2001). According to Choy (2001) when they obtain a certificate and enter the workforce they are similarly distributed among the occupation groups and average salaries did not differ either.

However, this conclusion differs from studies in other countries which conclude that first generation students tend to choose careers that are lower paid. In Chile, for example, Castillo and Cabezas (2010) have made one of the only large-scale studies focused on first generation students. They compared the career choices of first and non-

first generation students in Chile and they found that first generation students are highly concentrated in subject areas such as education, commerce and technology, all of which are connected with jobs that tend to have lower salaries. In Australia in turn, one study that compares the transition of first in family and non-first in their family university students also concludes that the program choices are different. The first groups were more frequently enrolled in education, economics and science, whereas non-first in family students were more often enrolled in law, medicine/dentistry and engineering (Luczecky, Scutter, King & Brinkworth, 2011).

Most of these studies undertaken in the United States use an interactional model as a theoretical approach (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1997, 1998). Tinto's model is a sociological approach to the problem of retention and attrition at university. Its main contribution is to conceive attrition as a multivariate phenomenon in which explanation is not only dependent on students' social origins or entry educational levels. The institutional environment plays a significant role in higher retention rates. The key factor to increase students' persistence is their level of integration into the "university community" which has two dimensions: "social" and "academic" (Tinto, 1987).

In the early 1980s, Billson and Terry (1982, cited in Terenzini et al., 1996) stated that first generation university students were at greater risk in terms of lower levels of retention and degree completion than other students because of lower levels of academic and social integration. These scholars have enriched Tinto and Spady's perspective about university integration, by identifying more specific dimensions like "education commitment", "academic behaviour" and "expected level of involvement" (Woosley & Shepler, 2011). Others have tried to incorporate a focus on psychological disposition that can influence students' involvement such as "inner" and "external" motivation (Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007). These scholars follow the principles of the "Interactional" model in terms of analysing the correlation between individual variables, environmental variables and their influences on student outcomes.

The single exception among this group is the study by Pascarella et al. (2004) who approached the topic of integration using the notion of "social and cultural capital" and "habitus" from Bourdieu (1988, 2002; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, among others). I will

consider the contribution of Bourdieu's approach to educational transitions in greater depth in the next chapter. Through this approach, Pascarella and colleagues highlight the significance of the previous history (family and social networks) of first generation students on the way they engage with the academic environment and their possibilities of success. However, they tend to reproduce a "deficit" approach assuming that the main role of university is to compensate for the social resources that these students do not have. Moreover, this research only focused on the students' life within university, finding correlations between social integration and cognitive and psychosocial outcomes in a similar way to other studies using the interactionist model (For example, Terenzini et al., 1996).

All of these studies agree that one of the problems that most affects this group of students is their tendency to feel isolated. Some first generation university students feel that access to university is a privilege that they may not deserve. They tend to see the other students as members of an "insiders club" (Cushman, 2007). This entails a voluntary isolation and makes it slow to learn the new relations and codes of the academic "game" (Bowl, 2001 as cited in Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

Other aspects such as spending more time in paying jobs and having more family responsibilities have been seen to harm the opportunities that these students have for complete integration (Undergraduate Experience Survey, UCUES, 2003 as cited in Thomas et. al, 2007). Overall, they spend less time sharing and partying with other students and tend to participate less in extracurricular activities such as athletics, voluntary work and non-course interactions with other students (Pascarella et al., 2004). They are also less likely to participate in ethnic awareness workshops, "to perceive faculty members as concerned for student development and teaching" and "to report receiving encouragement from friends to continue their enrolment" (Terenzini et al., 1996, pp. 18-19). Apparently, one of the aspects that most affects first generation students in the United States is that most of them live off campus, which has a profound effect on student engagement (Pike & Kuh, 2005, Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

Having a higher level of integration in university also has a significant impact on the way students access available services and make use of the supporting networks. These

are elements which are very important for working class and first generation university students, as a way to complement the lack of support they tend to experience within the family (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt & Leonard, 2007 as cited in Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

Beyond their different approaches and samples, the most important contribution of this group of studies is their conclusion that a significant level of integration has a more positive impact on learning outcomes on first generation students than on other students (Woosley & Shepler, 2011, Pascarella, et.al 2004, Prospero, 2007). Pascarella and colleagues (2004) showed that while these types of experiences do not have a significant impact on non-first generation students, “extra-curricular involvement had significant positive effects on critical thinking, degree plans, internal locus of attribution for academic success, and preference for higher-order cognitive tasks for first generation students” (p. 278).

Therefore, these studies conclude that first generation university students differ from other students in the level of their expectations, integration to the environment and academic outcomes. They tend to reproduce a deficit model conceiving the “difference” of first generation students mainly as a handicap. At the same time, they conceive that institutions are the ones that can decrease the gap between both groups. The contribution of first generation students’ perspectives to the academic environment is ignored. However, their findings make clear that institutional support must not only be restricted to financial aid. It is important that institutions provide programmes which are pertinent to first generation students, oriented to strengthen their academic expectations, preparation and engagement.

These studies also highlight the difference between first generation university students and other students during secondary school and the first years of college. However, those who persist after that, decrease the gap with other students in academic outcomes and levels of graduation. This reinforces the idea that educational institutions have to provide an effective support during secondary school and first year university as a way to widen the opportunities for this group of students (Choy, 2001; Horn & Nuñez, 2000).

Though these studies have value, they overlook aspects that need to be examined to better understand first generation students' experiences. These studies do not give enough consideration to the influence of external experiences over the decision to remain at university. They tend to isolate university as a unit of analysis ignoring the influence of aspects such as social networks outside or informal learning spaces. When the research addresses aspects such as engagement or motivation, they do not use methods to collect student perception about why engagement is an important element in a specific context.

These studies also do not investigate power relations within the academic field to explain whether this is an important factor. Accordingly, they do not analyse the aspects of institutional structure which affect the opportunities for students to find spaces of belonging. They ignore the way that academic institutions tend to legitimate only some forms of knowledge and learning excluding others, particularly those that respond to the social background of new students in the system. As a consequence, they do not consider the contribution that these students can make to the system from their own and different background. Therefore, these studies do not problematize the relationship between institutions and students in its complexities, considering the impact of power structures on student experience. To progress from a deficit approach to a transformative approach (Thomas & Quinn, 2007) as I suggested in the Chapter One, it is necessary to put students' perceptions at the centre of the analysis. It is necessary to consider that educational transitions respond to a complex confluence of the cultural background of students and institutional structures with their particular power dynamics. This topic is important to understand the complex ways through which students value their educational experiences and the resources they use to persist and progress.

Second category: Cultural identity and educational transitions

The second group of studies about first generation university students identified at the beginning of this chapter puts students' experiences at the centre of their interest, using an approach focused on identity. These studies, which apply qualitative or narrative methodologies, examine students' experiences from their own perspectives. Through

their focus on students' own stories these scholars show the difficulties that first generation students face in balancing different contexts of belonging (family, class, academia, etc.). At the same time, these works show how student identity is redefined while progressing within the academic environment.

London (1989, 1992) analyses the experience of first generation students within the family context. His findings revealed that for these families, the experience of having a son or daughter at university is a contradictory one: on the one hand, it can make the expectation of social mobility possible; while on the other hand, it also threatens historically rooted familial patterns. Drawing on the "family system theory" (Sterlien, 1974, 1980 as cited in London, 1989) London stated that the university enrolment change the traditional pattern of "separation" from the parents. University access leads to the extension of the dependence that is traditionally expected for young people and the delay of their adult responsibilities. The encounter with the academic environment is also an encounter with different people, values and life styles and generally an increase in critical thinking, which can be a cause of stress for the family. To avoid conflicts, some students can hide their academic role in front of their families; women students for example can keep doing their domestic activities pretending they do not have to respond to their academic ones (London, 1989).

In other situations, parents use what London (1989) calls "the delegating mode" (p. 147) which promotes young people's access to university as a way to satisfy parents "incomplete identity" (p. 147). Some parents have frustrated expectations about attending university or want access to a better status through their children. When that happens, students can live their university experience under strong parental pressure which can damage their inner motivation.

These studies showed an ambiguous response within first generation university students' families with both support for their children but also resistance to their new role. Thus, they showed that educational transitions take the shape of a permanent negotiation and renegotiation between family members. London (1989) interpreted these tensions as a clash between a traditional family pattern, based on hierarchical

structures and rigid roles and a modern pattern, which promotes independence and autonomy among their members.

Within the university environment, the influence of being a first generation university student has various effects on issues of identity. For example, Orbe (2004) stated that aged women, belonging to minority groups are more likely to consider that being a first generation student is a relevant issue for their identity and their relationships with others. The same study showed that the characteristics of the student body also influenced this issue. Being a first generation student tends to be more influential to students coming from elite universities, where they are a minority group, rather than the ones coming from two year colleges.

The biographical approach used by most of these studies distinguished the voice of students and the process of identity loss and identity redefinition which they experience during their transitions (Lara, 1992; Rendon, 1992; Rodriguez, 1975; Weis, 1992). Some narratives describe their involvement within the academic environment as an acculturation process in which “alienation” is the requirement to success. As Rendon (1992) stated; “to become academic success stories we must endure humiliation, reject old values and traditions, mistrust our experiences and disconnect with our past” (p. 62). Thus, they report that forgetting their past and their original culture was a condition to their full assimilation (Rodriguez, 1975).

However, not all the experiences culminate in an assimilative process to the new environment. The stories also show situations when, paradoxically, social exclusion or identity negation can lead to identity reinforcement. Rodriguez (1975) showed how social exclusion of Chicano students created new responses oriented to strengthen their own identity symbols into the university, expressed in new aesthetics and discourses. Similarly, O’Shea (2013) who undertook one study with first generation university women in Australia, stated that in the university these women “unfolded a range of new perspectives and demands that assisted in rupturing gendered roles and exposed the contested nature of such domains” (O’Shea, 2013, p. 156).

In recent times, as the participation of traditionally excluded groups in education has increased rapidly, these collective identities are redefined in complex ways. Stuber (2009) for example, explored the role of class identity on student retention. In his research about first generation, working class, white students, he states that the sense of belonging to a working class identity can increase student commitment with academic activities and helped these students to clarify their future projections. This is influenced by support programmes oriented to this specific group of students which, after joining them together, reinforce their awareness of “being different” and coming from a shared history of social exclusion. On the other side, the lack of sense of belonging with their own group can cause more difficulties for first generation students in understanding their isolation. In these cases, students tend to blame themselves for their problems to achieve full integration. In other cases, as it is with black students (Weiss, 1992), they blame other members of the own group instead of finding the causes of isolation in the institutional structure.

This second group of studies provides a deeper view of the experience of these students from their identity dynamics. They show how transitions are lived as a slow, contradictory and difficult process. This critiques abstract and linear notion of transitions on which many public policies are based. The conclusions of these studies invite a review of the traditional notions of academic and social integration used by the interactional model. The studies show evidence of the tensions that emerge within different relations and discourses (personal, familiar or institutional) through which students redefine their identity in the encounter with the academic sphere.

These studies shift the focus from student deficit and institutional support to explore the role that collective identities can play to shape educational transitions. These collective identities frame their relations at the university, reinforce their personal resources to have better achievement, and can help first generation students to achieve a clearer definition of their life projects. However, these studies do not propose a clear theoretical framework to approach this topic. Despite providing a rich source of exploration of the meanings and personal experiences involved in transitional process from the perspective of students, they tend to overlook the relations between cultural identities and

institutional structures. The problem of power is expressed in the testimonies but they do not inquire into the logics of power within institutional structures.

Their timeframe is also restricted. Most of them do not include an exploration of the school experiences as a first stage in the transition to university. Knowing more about this period is key to understanding how the disposition to confront university students was shaped not only within the family but also in school experiences.

In the next chapter, I outline the theoretical approach I have undertaken to educational transitions of first generation students. This theoretical approach attempts to respond to three main problems.

First, the study attempts to understand the influence of school experiences on university experiences. The studies reviewed in the first category above show that school experiences are significant to understanding the dispositions towards learning of first generation students at university.

Second, the study attempts to understand the different relations and discourses that shape students' perspectives of their learning experiences. The second category of studies described above showed that transitions are presented as a complex encounter between different identity discourses which tend to be in conflictive relations. The ability of students to connect them (for example, institutional and cultural identities) also enables them to remain in the university and graduate.

Third, I understand schools and universities as sites of power, shaped by social relations which tend to reproduce social inequalities. I contend that this is a key aspect of understanding the gap between them and students whose parents had university experience. The marginal positions that first generation students have within the university environment (including the devaluation of their history and knowledge) is one key element to understanding why first generation students confront problems of integration along their transitions. In the next chapter I present the theoretical approach to this problem.

CHAPTER 4:

DIALOGISM AND IMAGINED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Dialogical approach

In this study, I use a dialogical approach (Bakhtin, 1973, 1981, 1986a, 1986b; Frank, 2005; Haye & Larrain, 2011; Matusov, 2009, Voloshinov, 1973) to understand student transitions as an encounter between different discourses. At the same time, I use Bourdieu's (1990b, 2002) concept of habitus to understand the biographical continuities of school experiences on university perspectives. The concept of habitus is also the main tool I use to interpret power relations between students and institutions along their transitions. Finally, I use the notion of "Imagined social capital" (Quinn, 2003, 2010a, 2010b) and "learning ecologies" (Matusov, 2009) to understand the visual and verbal space in which students situate their learning experiences, as a way to understand their sense of belonging along their transition. I begin by justifying my reasons for using this approach.

Dialogism is an emergent theoretical perspective in human sciences (Linell, 2009). Its origin can be tracked back to Socrates (Van Der Linden & Renshaw, 2004) who create a method based on inquiry questions, which included the capacity to create appropriate question and discover inner contradictions through dialogue. Socrates also proposed a method that did not rely on an "established authority" (Van Der Linden & Renshaw, p. 2) but in a collective reflection where the "guide" would validate different voices as a way to approach truth and knowledge.

The main proponent of dialogical approach in the twentieth century was Michael Bakhtin,¹⁶ whose perspective will form the basis of my analysis of subject and biographical narratives. Bakhtin focused mainly on literary analysis, however, he described his perspective as a "philosophical anthropology" (Todorov, 1984). In recent

¹⁶ The works signed by Voloshinov were largely written by Bakhtin (Morris, 1994 as cited in Shields, 2007). Most Bakhtinian scholars today assumed that the works signed by Voloshinov and Medvedev are Bakhtin's works.

years, he has influenced different fields such as social psychology (Larrain & Medina, 2007; Leitao, 1983; Markova, 2003; Markova & Foppa, 1990; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Mininni, 2010) and sociology (Bender, 1998; Bernard-Donals, 1998, 1998b).

In the field of education, dialogism has resulted in the development of “dialogic pedagogies” (Bergqvist & Roger, 2004; Elbers & De Haan, 2004; Geert Ten Dam & Wardekker, 2004; Matusov, 2009; Van Boxtel, 2004) which aim to overcome teacher-centred and instructive teaching methodologies. Critical research in education has also been influenced by the perspective of Bakhtin, as a vehicle to challenge predominant discourses in educational institutions.

Dialogism tries to overcome the duality between objectivism and subjectivism that predominates in human sciences (Todorov, 1984). Bakhtin contested the objectivist approach to language in the structuralist tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure who is considered the “father” of structuralism. Saussure’s approach to language and discourse had a strong influence on the development of human science during the twentieth century. He conceived language as a duality between “langue” (language) which was the abstract, logic and objective rules of the system of language and “paroles” (words) which is its actual and practical use (Saussure, 1959). Saussure focused his analysis on “langue”, as he believed that it was the most stable feature of language. “Parole” instead, was perceived by Saussure as an impossible field to apprehend due to its dependence on the individual and infinite variability.

Bakhtin in turn considers that the analysis of language could not to be reduced to a set of logic and abstract rules separated from the specific social context where dialogue occurs (Bakhtin, 1981). However, dialogism also contests the subjectivist tradition (Todorov, 1984; Bakhtin, 1981) which considers that reality depends mainly of an individual perception, feeling or writing style. The object of dialogism therefore is not language as an abstract system, not the “word” in its material form, but the space of encounter between different discourses in the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986a). In a critique of a formalist approach to art appreciation, Bakhtin clearly describes what distinguishes dialogical sciences from other disciplines:

The 'artistic', in its totality, does not reside in the thing, or in the psyche of the creator, considered independently, not even in that of the contemplator: the artistic includes all three together. It is a specific form of the relation between creator and contemplators, fixed in the artistic work. (Voloshinov, 1926 as cited in Todorov, 1984, p. 21)

Considering its emphasis on communication as a socially situated act, dialogism has certain points in common with social constructivist approaches. Both contest a positivist belief in objective knowledge and that identity is unitary and continuous (Torres, 2008) and state instead that communication and knowledge are socially and historically situated and identity is constructed in relationship and communication with others.

However, dialogism differentiates itself from social constructivist approaches. Constructivism conceives identity as a co-constructed process between individuals and social reality, in which both tend to articulate the same social process (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), whereas dialogism recognises a clear autonomy of subject and social reality in the context of communication. The subject does not build its identity as part of the social context, but it remains as an autonomous conscience that enters into dialogue with the social reality. The subject and their social reality are always autonomous spheres which create a space of encounter clearly different to any of the discourses participating in a dialogue (Todorov, 1984).

Thus, contrary to social constructivism, dialogism focuses on difference rather than on identity. The dialogue has a minimal unit of analysis in which there are two voices or perspectives. The subject emerges in the boundary with otherness. The subject should not be conceived as an identity but as a position towards others (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986a). This implies that personal identity, although historical and contextual, is never finished, never completed in the dialogue.

Dialogism has some similarities but is clearly different to dialectical approaches (Wegerif, 2008). Both theories recognise the importance of otherness in social acts. However, while dialectic theory emphasize contradictions and oppositions between one

and the other, dialogism emphasizes the encounter with the other to construct the self. From a dialectical point of view, these contradictions always tend to end in a final synthesis. Dialogism postulates that this final synthesis is not possible to achieve, and multiple voices never merge in a single one: “dialectics was born of dialogue so as to return against to dialogue on a higher level” (Bakhtin, 1986b, p.161). For Bakhtin, social facts have always been perceived as open units where difference is never entirely solved.

Consequently, the distinctive features of dialogism are not only in its object but also in its method. Bakhtin asserts that the main goal of human sciences are not knowledge but “understanding” (Voloshinov, 1973).¹⁷ If the subjects are recognised as a space of boundary in which different discourses are encountered, then, the position of the social scientist strongly differs from that of the natural scientists. Natural science confronts a voiceless thing, whereas social sciences enter a space of dialogue between different discourses. As Voloshinov (1973 as cited in Todorov, 1984) states:

[Understanding] it is not at all a question of an exact and passive reflection, of a redoubling of the other’s experience within me (such a redoubling is, in any case impossible), but a matter of translating the experience into an altogether different axiological perspective, into new categories of evaluation and formation. (p. 22)

Thus, the role of the observer is deeply embedded in a dialogical approach and in the certainty that the subject “researcher” and the “subject” observed are all immersed in a space of dialogue where different voices participate. However, this encounter recognises the autonomy of both subjects in which the subject observed will never be fused with the perspective of the observer. On the contrary, they will create a new unique space of understanding which is the final object of dialogical sciences.

¹⁷ Most Bakhtinian scholars today assume that the works signed by Voloshinov and Medvedev are Bakhtin’s works (Morris, 1994 as cited in Shields, 2007).

Dialogical perspective to approach social discourse

In the previous chapter, I critiqued the traditional approaches that have predominated public policy readings of educational transitions. Most of them are based on a positivistic understanding of self which considers the individual as a “singular, integrated and separated unity” (Torres, 2008, p. 64). Dialogism situates biographical narratives as a complex topic, in which subjects are articulated in different positions and are shaped by multiple discourses.

I have selected four concepts of dialogism that synthesise an important part of its approach to the problem of social discourse: utterance, super-addressee, speech genres and centrifugal-centripetal forces. These notions are useful in understanding a dialogical approach to biographical narratives in this study.

For dialogism, the unit of analysis of the discursive communication is the utterance. From a narrative perspective, I understand utterance as the medium through which social actors attempt to communicate an image of themselves and present them to others in a specific context. The utterance defines the living, dialogical and situated quality of the language (Bakhtin, 1986a). But what is an utterance? In contrast to the structure of a sentence, the limits and breaks of the utterance are not grammatical breaks. In a dialogical context, they are produced by some external situation (Bakhtin, 1986a). Every utterance is constructed as an active response in relation to other multiple utterances, present or absent in the context of dialogue, either situated in the past or expected in the future. After creating the utterance, the other’s response (question, confirmation, objection, etc.) is expected. The utterance’s boundaries are defined by this active responsive character.

A narrative approach needs to disclose how this responsive character defines the position of the speaker in the context of dialogue. This position is not only verbally expressed, but has a specific “style” (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 84) which is comprised of all expressive elements involved in the communication act, such as gestures and attitudes, etc. As Haye and Larrain (2011) state:

Each utterance is a response, but so is the verbal expression articulated in the utterance, the gestures involved in the utterance, the speech act performed, the position taken by the speaker, the emotional tone expressed, and so on. (p. 44)

However, the utterance must not be understood as a purely individual act. Through the notion of “super-addressee”, Bakhtin (1986a) expresses the ideological forces that influence dialogue. Dialogue is not limited to the immediate interaction. Participants in the dialogue do not refer only to the voices present in the actual situation. Dialogue has a third participant; the super-addressee, a hypothetical one who is presumed to understand the context of the dialogue and what is being said.

Whenever people talk, they do not start from a zero meaning point (Bakhtin, 1986a). Based on their experience, they assume the previous and subsequent existence of other and parallel unspoken assumptions upon which dialogue is constructed. This third participant in the dialogue is essential to identify the position that people express through their discourse, as part of a particular social field. Super-addressee refers to very concrete entities and discourses that exceed the actual interaction (God, ideological discourse, political referent or a specific cultural belonging).

In addition, and strongly related to the concepts of utterance and super-addressee, is the notion of “speech genres” (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 60) which are “equivalent to the term discourse in contemporary social science literature” (Burkitt, 1998, p. 165). Speech genres define the social conditioning use of the discourse. As Bakhtin states:

The speaker’s speech is manifested primarily in the choice of a particular speech genre [...] One particular function (scientific, technical official, from the daily life) and certain particular conditions specific to each sphere of the discourse communication, generate certain genres, i.e. some thematic, compositional and stylistic types of fairly stable statements (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 78).

We can identify the position of the participants in the dialogue, by distinguishing which “speech genre” he or she is using. Bakhtin distinguishes between “simple” (or “primary”) and “secondary” speech genres (1986a, p. 62). Secondary speech genres are more complex, they are institutionalized and formalized. They comprise “all kinds of scientific research primarily written such as artistic, scientific, socio-political” (p. 62). Simple speech genres are those that are less formalised and basically respond to the ones used in daily life. The relevance of the interaction of secondary and primary speech genres is, according to Bakhtin (1986a), one of the key aspects of understanding social language:

The very interrelations between primary and secondary genres and the process of the historical formation of the later, shed light on the nature of the utterance (and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations among language, ideology and world view). (p. 62)

Secondary speech genres tend to apply its force on primary ones, absorbing and digesting them in different forms. When primary genres are influenced by secondary genres, the first ones tend “to lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others” (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 62). This is the process of discourse institutionalisation.

Bakhtin therefore sees that social discourse has to be conceived as a permanent tension between two forces, some of them pushed toward “monoglossia” and others toward “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981). Monoglossia is the tendency to impose one single perspective when creating a discourse. All the voices that intervene in the dialogue are oriented to this unique direction in which differences are denied.

In contrast, heteroglossia recognises the participation of multiple voices in similar positions in the dialogue. What characterises heteroglossia is that the subject is expressed through different voices simultaneously. Bakhtin sees a paradigmatic example of the potential of centrifugal forces in his analysis of Dostoevsky’s novel, which he calls a “polyphonic novel” (Bakhtin, 1973). As he states at the beginning of this study:

An acquaintance with the voluminous literature on Dostoevsky creates the impression that the subject under discussion is not a single author-artist who wrote novels and novellas (povesti), but a whole series of philosophical statements made by several author-thinkers (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 3).

Thus, what Bakhtin discovered behind the Dostoevsky novel is not the authoritative monologic voice of a single author. In these novels, there is not an author that creates characters as his/her representations, but an open range of consciousness that represents different voices that are not subjected to the force of one discourse. On the other hand, centripetal forces push to control and centralize the dialogic reality of social language. As a social phenomenon, centripetal forces respond to “verbal-ideological evolution of specific social groups” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). As Bakhtin describes, “unitary language gives expression to forces working towards concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271).

It is important to underline that every utterance contains in itself centripetal and centrifugal forces. As a consequence, a dialogical approach must distinguish the complex interplay between centrifugal and centripetal forces in human discourse.

In summary, the dialogical approach applied to biographical narratives described in this thesis attempts to distinguish at least two components. First, the different speech genres (discourses) which participants put in place to interpret their reality when they narrate their learning experience. And second, the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces within the narrative as a manifestation of the difficult encounter between institutional discourses and social discourses. I will return to the narrative approach in Chapter Five.

In the next section, I propose to complement this dialogical approach with further theoretical concepts that are particularly useful to analyse the educational field. The

notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a) will be used to situate the analysis within the educational structures that reproduce social inequalities. Subsequently, the notion of “imagined social capital” (Quinn, 2005, 2010a) and “learning ecologies” (Matusov, 2009) will be used to understand the more creative aspects of educational transitions. Through imagined social capitals the students define their own participation in educational institutions.

Reproduction in education and the notion of habitus

The dialogical approach described above is the general theoretical approach used to examine narratives in this study. However, it does not provide specific clues to understand the educational field and its specificities. Therefore, I need to counter-balance Bakhtin’s theories which focus on text and discourse with other theories more inclined to the analysis of social structures and social relations, specific to the educational field.

A number of theorists have described how social reproduction theories can help to explain the unequal power relations within the educational field (Baudelot & Establet, 1974; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1964; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Such theorists describe the ways in which educational institutions reproduce the existing social structures using pedagogical, ritualistic and discursive strategies. According to their interpretative frame of pedagogical relations, some forms of knowledge and behaviours are considered to be more legitimate whereas others are denied or displaced to a marginal position. In turn, the legitimate forms represent those which are used by the dominant social groups, from middle or high middle class. Accordingly, schooling and university are institutional instruments through which the control of some social groups over others is exerted.

These theories coincide to describe the school system as one of the most effective fields in the social sphere in reproducing the inequalities already existing in the social structure. These theorists choose different aspects of the educational system to explain this issue: Bowles and Gintis (1976) uncovered the power relations that lie behind the

meritocratic ideal; while Bernstein (1975) deepened the analysis of ritual mechanism at school to reinforce the power of higher social classes.

My approach in this area is specifically informed by Pierre Bourdieu who provided an analysis of educational processes, practices and perceptions which act as reproductive mechanisms in education. Similarly to Bakhtin, Bourdieu tried to overcome the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism that has characterised the social sciences. He contested the objectivist belief in a perfect homology between structures and social representations. His theory has been called as a “structuralist-cognitivism” (Sidicaro, 2003) because he tried to describe how social structures produce, but at the same time are sustained, in cognitive dispositions. Thus, he recognised the capacity and agency of social actors in generating practices and representations. However, compared with Bakhtin, his approach was clearly inclined to the analysis of objective structures and structural conditioning rather than on social agency.

Bourdieu constructed his analysis through focusing on three main concepts; field, capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). A field is primarily defined by a specific kind of activity and social relations and configured by “positions objectively defined” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 72) which impose their power over their occupants, agents and institutions. The medium to participate in the field is by accessing the capital that each field provides. What defines the different types of capitals existing in society is that they emerge from a process of transubstantiation of economic forces in social, cultural or symbolic forces. Bourdieu uses the term capital as an economic analogy, to highlight that beyond their different contents and functions, all forms of capital are “derived from economic forces and give rise to economic consequences” (Grenfell & James, 2004, p. 510). Thus, economic differences between groups are expressed as a mechanism of “distinction” (Bourdieu, 1984) which legitimates the exercise of power but in the process hides the actual origin of this power.

Access to capital requires time and energy investment. The process starts in the family and continues in the educational system. During this time capital is “embodied”

(Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47), becoming part of people's forms of speaking, thinking and gesticulation. Simultaneously, it is "institutionalised" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47) through different rituals and ceremonies transforming the inherited capital into symbols of power specific to each field.

This process of capital incorporation creates what Bourdieu called "habitus" which is the concept that I will apply to this study. Habitus is defined as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structures structured predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 53). Habitus primarily expresses the homology between individual behaviours and social structures. It is through habitus that social agents reach the best positions in a field and it is through habitus that they reproduce the structure of relations of that field.

The educational field is one of the most significant institutions in which habitus is incorporated. The discourse of meritocracy creates the illusion that education is an autonomous sphere, which can equalise the opportunities of all students beyond their different social origins. However, the system uses different pedagogical strategies (such as form of assessments) and ceremonial procedures (certifications) through which class-based differences are interpreted as differences in talents and skills, and thus consecrates and legitimates them (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For this study, the notion of habitus helps me to understand the biographical continuities between school experience and university experience. I will examine the extent to which the habitus that emerges during school distinguishes the dispositions students take towards university.

Habitus is also connected to the idea of social trajectories. According to Bourdieu, habitus is the field in which people's interests unfold, opening possibilities to the future but at the same time delimiting the boundaries to achieve these interests. Bourdieu contested the notion of a life project that is conceived as a clear pathway that people individually base on a pure rational calculation built to achieve specific goals located in the future. Drawing on Husserl, Bourdieu differentiates "project" and "pretension": a

“project” is a conscious aiming at the future; whereas “pretension” is a pre-reflexive aiming at a forthcoming which offers itself as a quasi-present in the visible...as what is directly perceived” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 207). In its pretension form, the personal interest acts within the process of being part from a net of relations, where the domain of the codes of the specific field is acquired as a “sense of the game”¹⁸ (Bourdieu, 1990). Therefore, social trajectories can be considered as the product of the possibilities objectively given by the social structure and at the same time, “as part of a configured social formation and intuitively perceived within a habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977). The habitus expresses the dispositions to fulfil these possibilities.

In his studies about the educational field, Bourdieu mainly focused on the singular ways through which privileged groups within the educational field reproduce class habitus (Bourdieu, 1964, 1988). Bourdieu observed how students’ behaviours and practices could be seen to be at the interconnection of student cognitive cultural configuration and institutional structures of power (Bourdieu, 1964).

In “*The Heritors*” for example Bourdieu and Passeron (1964), stated that student behaviour at the university was a product of the individualist competencies that had been imposed at school. Individualism makes social class differences less visible and therefore it is difficult for students from lower class to perceive their disadvantage – as a collective within the system. Within university, upper middle class students perform certain specific cultural practices, in keeping specific to their social class without being aware that these are class-based practices. These students’ discourses shows a sort of behaviour that Bourdieu called “dilettantism” (Bourdieu, 1964, p. 64) through which they perform a distant attitude towards teaching and institutional expectations. This position is described by Bourdieu as an intuitive way to express the control higher class students have over the educational field. Through dilettantism they send a subtle message that they know that they do not need to be validated by teachers to access high positions in the future.

¹⁸ “Sense of the game” is another expression that Bourdieu used to define “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990b).

The notion of habitus has been one of the most controversial concepts developed by Bourdieu. Some scholars, particularly those coming from a critical perspective, have contested Bourdieu's approach for being too deterministic and for overlooking the capacity of social agents to resist and transform power structures (Giroux, 1983a). They consider that, despite Bourdieu's intent to overcome the dualism of structure and agency, the structural conditions are the ones that dominate his approach to social agency (R. Jenkins, 2002). To a similar extent, some scholars have criticised the excessive emphasis that Bourdieu put on intuitive and instinctive aspects of habitus and interest (N. Crossley, 1999; Reay, 2004). They consider that Bourdieu tended to exaggerate his argument conceiving social practices from an excessive pre-rational perspective that did not recognise the ability of individuals or particular groups to generate their own dispositions within a field.

According to Bourdieu (1985), the notion of habitus was explicitly created as a response to traditional structural perspectives that viewed agents purely as "bearer-triggers" (p. 13) of structure. Bourdieu contested structuralism by creating a definition of practices "to put forward the 'creative', active and inventive capacities of habitus and agents" (p. 13). Within his definitions of habitus one encounters different perspectives. On occasions, "structural definitions" of habitus underline the influence of social structures over social agents even at the level of the body. Other definitions instead highlight the role of agents over structures, conceived habitus as a "selective perception of a situation" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 144), or a way to "construct the world by a certain way of orienting towards it" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 144).

Therefore, it is important to focus on the direction to which the active component of habitus is oriented. In the main definition of habitus as "structures structuring" (Bourdieu, 1984) it is possible to conclude that the active component is mainly oriented to reproduce social structures. However, I think that Bourdieu's alternative vision is that the 'reproductive orientation' is less a point of destiny than a delimited boundary in which habitus does not repeat practice mechanically. As he said, habitus creates instead "an infinite number of new structures" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 30) based on a historically acquired pattern and within certain limits.

According to Bourdieu, the most dynamic aspects of habitus are related to situations of misalignment between habitus and field or between positions and dispositions, caused by strong historical changes, generational changes or colonial impositions (Reay, 2004). These are situations which confront individuals with two different ways of life. Thus, it is possible to consider that non-traditional students accessing the academic field constitute one of these cases. In these contexts, the natural inertia of habitus confronts dispositions with social conditions and at the same time activates habitus “as a principle of improvisation” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 30) in order to cope with the changing field.

In order to recognise a more transformative form of habitus, Reay (2004) proposes analysing habitus by focusing more on its operationalization rather than on incorporation. Reay (2004) described cases in which the homology between social structures and psychological processes is not achieved and individuals are positioned between two different ways of being (Reay, 2004). When habitus is confronted by an unfamiliar field it can create a process of negotiation and ambivalences and lead individuals “to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of the self” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 511)

Some scholars also contribute to what can be named a more dialogical approach to habitus. A way to overcome the determinism of the concept, is to recognise reflexive processes that intervene in the process of habitus incorporation such as dialogues “with oneself” (Crossley, 2000 as cited in Reay, 2004) and “conscious deliberation” (Sayer, 2014 as cited in Reay, 2004). This means that the process of incorporation of habitus can be contradictory and can bring about changes according to different mental dispositions or orientations to actions that individuals confront in their biographies.

Therefore, habitus can be understood not as a perfect homology between cognitive and social structures, but as an encounter between different and contradictory dispositions. To this extent, I propose that there is a parallel between Bourdieu’s notion of disposition and the dialogical notion of utterance as “articulation of different positions”

in a space of dialogue (Haye & Larrain, 2011, p. 47). Habitus is composed of dispositions, says Bourdieu, who understood dispositions as “practices and representations” (Bourdieu, 2002). These dispositions are learned responses to a social context in which different discourses take place. If the analysis is oriented to the use of discourse, this relates to the notion of utterance. If habitus is understood as a disposition towards the social world, utterance is understood as the active understanding of the speaker in the form of dialogue with other utterances (Bakhtin, 1986a). Thus, I assume that what Bakhtin described from the point of view of discourse can be related to what Bourdieu described from the point of what he called practices and representations which shape habitus. Therefore, the utterance created by an individual from a specific group makes it possible to give insights into the main features of the habitus of the group to which this individual belongs.

The idea of “perspectives about learning” in this study is designed to disclose the positions of actors in a context of dialogue, revealed by their utterance. This idea refers to one or more specific positions that tend to persist in time, shaping the relationship between subjects and institutional structures in the form of habitus. The utterance refers to the main or dominant response to a situation that a specific habitus facilitates. Thus, despite coming from a different point of origin, Bakhtin’s dialogical approach and the approach of Bourdieu converge at points that are useful to identify the specific perspectives of first generation students about their learning experiences.

The notion of imagined social capital

The discussion above situates habitus in a tension between different forces. The main ones are centripetal forces which serve to push social practices to reproduce social structures. However, if one wants to consider other forces that influence students’ transitions, it is important to refer to other types of social and cultural capital that are not the ones that educational institutions try to inculcate.

Social and cultural capital are concepts strongly related to habitus, however, habitus is not the perfect reflection of capital. Habitus, states Reay (2004) “lies beneath cultural capital creating its myriad manifestations” (p. 435). As a result, I understand that diverse forms of cultural and social capital tend to contribute to a more complex and changeable form of habitus. Following this line I consider that certain forms of capital acquired outside educational institutions can be used to occupy positions in the educational field. Social agents can combine cultural goods that they receive from institutions with other cultural resources that help them to recreate their bonds with the educational environment. In this section I will describe some concepts students can use to build bridges between their cultural background and the institutional field.

Carter (2003) for example, addresses this issue in his study about retention of black students at university. He distinguishes between “dominant capitals” and “non-dominant capitals” (p.137). Dominant capitals are those that enable individuals to access privileged networks and positions whereas non-dominant capitals are those that enable minority groups to achieve status within their respective group of peers. Non-dominant capitals serve a more “expressive” than “instrumental” purpose (Carter, 2003, p. 138). According to Carter, students in the university used a combination of both forms of capitals depending on the context, in order to access better positions within the educational field. Thus, in the case of students researched by Carter, “Black capital” (Carter, 2003, p. 136) allowed students to distance themselves from the dominant institutional perspectives which undervalued them. At the same time, “Black capital” strengthened their self-confidence and helped them to achieve a stronger sense of belonging and solidarity among their peers.

This study builds upon Carter’s ideas and his aim to create a new approach to the idea of social and cultural capital. This is relevant for this study because it provides a new lens to understand the agency of first generation students in managing their own relationships within the educational field. This leads one to understand that retention in the university is not entirely dependent on the degree of integration into academic activities or social activities defined by academic authorities. Integration is a complex experience in which students shift from one position to another and one social network

to another according to the contexts. These different social networks are at the same time different ways of producing meaningful learning experiences that are not strictly aligned to what academic institutions expect.

Following this pathway, there is a very useful concept coined by Quinn in the context of her studies about non-traditional women students in the university. She combines concepts from educational research, feminist theories, human geography and cultural studies to build the notion of “imagined social capital” (2005, 2010a, 2010b). She found that women’s main motivation to remain at university is located in their own imaginaries which link them with other people inside or outside university.

Thus, she defines imagined social capital as “networks with ‘real’ others that are created to perform a symbolic function” (Quinn, 2010a, p.68). More indirectly, imagined social capital is “the benefit that is created by participating in imagined or symbolic networks” (p.68). Most forms of imagined social capitals “build bridges” (p.85) between informal and formal experiences and between home and education spaces. They create spaces of belonging in an academic space where students can be perceived as strangers. This enables students to avoid the alienation that some non-traditional students suffer in the academic fields.

The potential for imagined social capital to motivate learning is that this is not created for students, but they themselves create it based on their particular identity. Thus, their imaginaries act as an object of desire that pushes them to persist and achieve. As Quinn (2010a) states: “Symbolic and imagined networks that learners create, can be found, can be summoned up and can be enjoyed and takes us forward rather than dragging us back” (p. 69)

Imagined social capital provides a learning experience that is usually opposed to the restricted, class based and ethnocentric forms of learning legitimated in academia. These symbolic networks can emerge as a response to conflicts or be seen to be acts of

resistance to something students do not want to be either related to peers or the institution. These experiences are situated in a broad range of cultural or social sites. They refer, for example, to the original context of belonging, ecological spaces where a specific expertise is unfolded or nostalgic bounds with cultures at risk of being destroyed (Quinn, 2003).

Quinn (2010a) gives examples of how some women built network with others within the university in which they reinforced a non-academic identity. They emphasized the value of learning from life and distanced themselves from those who went straight from school to university. At the same time, they created connections with marginal people (such as drug addicts or others) where they also reinforced a “negative” academic identity. In another example Quinn (2003) describes women who felt some degree of exclusion and invisibility at university, and who also perceived it as a space of refuge and freedom in opposition to the normative restriction of their cultural context

What is interesting is that imagined social capital does not have to be considered as mere resistance to the dominant order. It emerges both “by and in opposition to a formal learning environment, and this process of reaction and resistance is perhaps what ignites their flame” (Quinn, 2005, p. 15). The advantage of this kind of capital is that it is not class-based and all groups can produce it beyond their position in the social structure. In fact, Quinn considers that working class students have an advantage in producing imagined social capitals because they are less constrained in the conventional institutional spaces, where most students situate learning (Quinn, 2010a). What Quinn saw in most of these examples, is that the resonances of these communities are following these students and are “shaping their decisions” all along their educational experience (p. 78).

Quinn (2010a) critiques some approaches to non-traditional students that have been developed around the idea of “learning communities” or “community of practices”. She considers that these kind of initiatives express an idealized image of university as a place of full integration, concealing their actual mechanisms of ethnic, gender or social

exclusion. Communities sustains an idealized position with “pragmatic and regulatory ends” (p.47) which are designed to follow the prevalent discourses around skills, employability, competition and citizenship (Quinn, 2010a). So although a learning community discursively invites non-traditional students to increase their participation, it also tends to restrict their opportunities to develop from their own cultural backgrounds. According to Quinn (2010a), learning communities act as closed and restricted units where singularity and dissidence are generally not valued as part of the learning process.

In opposition, “imagined social capital” activates the power of difference; Quinn proposes to work with the idea of “stranger” (Young, 1990 as cited in Quinn, 2010a) which represents the possibility of being “recognised as not belonging” (Ahmed 2000 as cited in Quinn, 2010a). Students can act as part of a collective by being aware that all of them are strangers to the others to some extent. This difference is the key for them not to be absorbed by the homogenizing discourses and the undifferentiated image of students that dominate in the educational system.

The dialogical connotations of this definition are evident. Imagined social capital is shaped by centripetal and centrifugal forces. It shows on one side, the resistance against academia and, on the other side, it describes how students can create a sense of belonging with university and move students towards their academic goals. These imaginary networks are shaped by a polyphony of multiple social relations referents and landscapes, which are activated along the educational transitions. Students position themselves in different social contexts and speak from different voices, academic and non-academic, which shape their learning experiences. Thus, imagined social capital represents the expansive feature of educational experiences and focuses the analysis on the ability of students to combine diverse voices and experiences.

Furthermore, it is important to say that students locate their learning experiences not only in social networks, but also in ecological environments. Quinn in her study of unqualified workers in rural areas, identifies some forms of imagined social capital deeply connected to the natural environment. She asked herself whether these can be

called social capital without giving a definitive response. To distinguish these spatial and social forms of imagined social capital I use the concept “learning ecologies”. This concept has been coined before by Matusov (2009) who states that learning ecologies involve the conditions created for learning in a specific place. Matusov studies the “conditions of a polyphonic classroom” in which teachers and students are aware of the dialogic conditions of learning. He stated that a polyphonic classroom is the opposite to a “violent educational ecology” (p. 313) in which teachers react to students disengagement through punishment. Polyphonic learning ecologies are those that break the centripetal orientation of conventional teaching, enabling students to engage in multiple, flexible and mutually-constructed activities with teachers.

I have used the concept of “learning ecology” here with a slightly different meaning. I do not focus exclusively on the interaction between students and teachers. I emphasize the spatial, real or imaginary locations of learning that students create when constructing their narratives (See Chapters Eight and Nine). Thus, I attempt to show how student perceptions about learning include at the same time cultural and natural milestones, imagined and material elements integrated in a holistic unit. These socio-spatial imaginaries refer to social relations and can potentially be a “grounded wisdom” source, where a particular sort of knowledge emerges.

The notions of imagined social capital and learning ecologies have several advantages in approaching educational transitions. Imagined social capital is a concept based on the analysis of social differences within university, considering that some cultural configurations are more or less legitimized in the academic environment than others. However, it also promotes the recognition of different cultural expressions within university and acknowledges the different relations students establish with the academic environment.

Thus, both concepts create a new approach to the idea of student integration to university. They are used by students to build continuities with the academic environment and their social background, which support them in their educational

progression. However, these imagined social networks push them at the same time to an attachment with the academic environment and to resistance and opposition against it. This tension, never entirely resolved, is what supports students to progress in preserving their own cultural perspective within university.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed the concept of habitus. The notion of habitus will be used to understand the continuities between the school experiences and the university experience. I have argued that Bourdieu's analysis of habitus in education has largely focused on the most privileged groups of students. By including Bakhtin's idea of utterance and Quinn's notion of imagined social capital I have tried to enrich the concept of habitus to enable a more flexible and transformative approach when studying working class first generation students. These students face a number of challenges to succeed at university with cultural and social backgrounds that are different to the prevailing ones in the educational field. My approach in this study therefore views habitus as a interplay of different forms of capitals responding to the different fields in which students are located. Imagined social capital is the way through which students build connections between the educational field and the social field. Learning ecologies are the way through which imagined social capital is materialised in specific representations (places and people). Therefore, this study attempts to distinguish how different forms of imagined social capital and learning ecologies are expressed in the way students narrate and build their experience during university.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING NARRATIVES

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the methodology I used and how it is linked to the aims of this research. In sections one and two of this chapter, I outline the key assumptions which underpin a qualitative approach and the narrative perspectives that guide this study. In section three, I explain the criteria used to select participants and the recruitment process. Following that I present the different stages of the interview process, the method and aims of photo-elicitation interviews and group interview. I then describe the method of narrative analysis based on the notion of chronotope and field of interlocution. I conclude the chapter by presenting the ethical considerations of this study.

Doing qualitative research

As discussed earlier in Chapters Two and Three, I have taken a comparative perspective that emphasizes the social contexts of students' learning experiences across two nations. To achieve that I required research methodologies that allowed me to conceive of learning experiences from a multi-faceted perspective that included recognition of students' cognitive, experiential and emotional dispositions. Accordingly, I chose to apply qualitative methodologies because they emphasize data contextualisation (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Gadamer, 1994). While quantitative approaches seek generalisation and emphasize similarities between large samples, qualitative methodologies are applied to studies that are sensitive to particularities and differences. Qualitative methodologies prioritise a "complex, detailed understanding" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 40) of the issue under analysis. In this respect, specific responses are not the focus, rather, the researcher must try to understand the reasons why the responses (discourses) have been given in specific situations (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). This requires an exploration of social and cultural practices and discourses.

Qualitative methodologies situate the process of knowledge production within the relationship between researcher and participants and both parties play an active role in this process. From a critical point of view, the main research goal is not merely to increase knowledge through a process of “description, interpretation or reanimation of a slice of reality” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 406). On the contrary, qualitative methodologies focus on the “purposes and procedures of interpretation” (Denzin 2008, p. 414). As a result, research techniques are not understood as a set of fixed instruments to collect data, but as “a way to engage and negotiate” (Denzin, 2008, p. 422) with participants in terms of their mutual involvement, expectations and commitment to the research process.

The use of qualitative methodologies such as interviews, group discussions and observations open opportunities to change and adjust procedures during the process, based on an active negotiation with the different actors involved (Denzin, 2008, p. 422). These processes of negotiation can be useful when dealing with unexpected situations. In this study for example, the process of recruiting and interviewing participants included several re-negotiations that led to changes to the original research plan and design. These events were integrated as a constitutive part of the research outcomes. Negotiation also implies the use of research techniques that make sense to participants and which can be used with creativity, thus widening their expressive options. This is something that I emphasized through the use of different methods of collecting data and the use of visual and creative techniques which I will explain in more detail later in this chapter.

The emphasis on process and the use of diverse techniques make it more difficult to define standardised criteria to validate findings in qualitative studies. As Steiner and Peshkin (1990) state, in qualitative research, “the good is more elusive because its procedures are more idiosyncratic” (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 2). The debate about validation in qualitative studies focuses on the need to overcome the “naive realism” of the positivist methods without falling into a “nihilist” relativism which does not recognise the possibility to achieve a general truth (Silverman, 1993).

I agree with Denzin (1994) when he states that in qualitative methodologies validity does not depend upon the stability and reliability of the methods in use. Rather, it lies with an accurate reading of the research situation, its conditions and implications for the research process. Valid research is also the one that opens up opportunities to develop the study in the future. Following Gadamer (1994) I aimed to conduct a fertile study, which could raise new possibilities. The findings of this research, therefore, are intended as an invitation to open up a space for dialogue with future comparative studies in similar or different contexts. The main criteria for defining the quality of one's research is to compare what was intended with how committed the study was to achieving these aims in the specific context of the fieldwork and with the specific people involved as participants in the research.

To define the research situations, its condition and implication it is necessary to incorporate the researcher's position in the analysis. The notion of validity is mainly based on an ethical imperative. Positivist perspectives are based on the belief that the researcher can describe and interpret the other from a fixed and unified position, endowed with his/her methodological tools which give them the unique authority over the produced knowledge (Visweswaran, 1994). I draw on critical perspectives of qualitative methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 1997, 2005, 2008; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005; Hammersley, 1995; Harvey, 1990; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; L. Richardson, 1994; Smith, 1999). Critical researchers consider that research is, as any human activity, mediated by power relations that are economically and socially constituted. As Kincheloe and McLaren (2008) argue:

No pristine interpretation exists indeed, no methodology, social or educational theory, or discursive form can claim a privileged position that enables the production of authoritative knowledge. Researchers must always speak/write about the world in terms of something else in the world, in relation to... (p. 414)

Consistently, critical researchers understand research as a way to unmask the ideological mechanism of power structures which ignore, oppress or displace some

groups outside the centre of power (Denzin & Lincoln, 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008).

From a dialogical perspective in turn, this means that it is important to distinguish the different voices of participants within the social discourses under study (Frank, 2005). As Mishler stated “Dialogical research requires hearing participants’ stories not as surrogate observations of their lives outside the interview but as acts of engagement with researchers” (Mishler, 1986 as cited in Frank, 2005, p.969). The researcher and the researched should be conceived as polyphonic subjects composed of multiple and contradictory discourses.

Thus, researchers should avoid viewing situations and subjects as finished unities or to superimpose their own monological discourse over the polyphonic reality they confront (Frank, 2005). This is probably one of the main challenges for social research which, under the influence of positivism, has been historically under pressure to establish definitive categories or typologies to organise and simplify human behaviours (Frank, 2005). But this is not only a risk for positivists mainstream studies. Some critical and emancipatory approaches have also been critiqued for their use of “action criteria” that “politicize” research (Denzin, 1994, p. 509) and the claim that they are more preoccupied with theory verification (Roman, 1992) rather than hearing and interpreting the diverse voices of communities under study.

My approach to reflexivity differs from some postmodern approaches that tend to place the researcher in the spotlight (See critics of this approach in Kemmis, 1995; Marcus, 1998; Patai, 1994; Sangren, 1988). Instead, throughout the research I am consistent with the option to put participants’ voices at the centre of the analysis as a way of making visible their historically excluded perspectives about learning and to construct a coherent comparative analysis. However, I acknowledge that my position as the researcher had a significant impact on the data and that my insights are therefore situated and limited.

In this study, I approach participants and construct the analysis from my perspective as a Chilean, middle class, politically positioned, third generation university student. I was

aware that there were several discourses which shaped my experience as a researcher and which influenced my engagement with participants and the analysis process; all of this led to insights as well as blind spots in the outcomes of the study. In this document, in the first chapter I disclose my own position entering into the investigation with my “assumptions on the table” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 406). Drawing on my humanistic family background and my role as a policy advisor I chose to start this study from a critique of the dominant trends to analyse learning and of educational public policies. Consistently, I proposed to react against public policies that make invisible certain ways to “live” learning, particularly those that come from socially excluded groups.

Therefore, I applied two main perspectives to undertake this study which are connected to my professional background. Firstly, the “political aim” led me to deepen the description of the structure of the educational system in both countries. During the research process I was always projecting the results of the study to the future. I expected to use the findings of this research to make practical changes in the design of public educational policies when I moved back to my country. This influenced the selection I made of specific interview questions and the interview data in the study particularly, to construct the analysis of “trajectories” which is a concept that I will explain later in this chapter. On the other hand, my background as an anthropologist with some experience in training teachers and literary writing focused the analysis on the perceptive participant’s world, underlying their symbolic, emotional and aesthetic engagement with educational places.

In terms of my educational experience, as a person with university graduated grandparents, I knew that my experience was very different to the participants’ in the study. I had to consider that my experience was shaped by the academic background of people around me. This could create a sort of barrier of understanding with participants who were first generation students. I have never encountered the financial difficulties and the lack of support that these participants experienced. I have never lived in their neighbourhoods and I did not attend the poor schools some of them attended. To this extent I have approached their experience from the innocence of my more comfortable background. This required me to make additional effort to change and re-situate my

position when I collected the data. I used research techniques to integrate different positions towards participants as a way to overcome this limitation, which I will explain later in this chapter.

At the same time, I felt that having a different experience could also be in some ways an advantage to understand the participants' experiences. Considering that I came from a different background, I was not at risk of using the experience of these students as a way of redeeming my own "socially excluded position". However, during the research process, I discovered some aspects of my own biography of which I was not aware before starting it. I realised that some difficulties I confronted to do a Masters and a PhD programme were explained by the fact that I had parents who never achieved postgraduate level. Unlike the participants, I discovered that, as a first generation Master's student, I experienced similar situations to those that participants narrated when they referred to their families, such as contradictory support from parents to achieve at a higher level and a lack of models who had the work habits that Masters and PhD programmes demand. It was good to feel that, similarly to what happened to participants when they reviewed their biography, I also discovered during the research process ways through which I encouraged myself to achieve my current university level. These were also grounded in my own forms of imagined social capital that I built during my family and cultural experience. I discovered how my imaginaries of social justice and my multicultural life experience drove my study goals and helped me to achieve them.

Therefore, in this thesis I present myself as a vulnerable observer who brings to this study several discourses learnt from my biography that influence my relation to participants and the specific way I approach and interpret their experience. I also explain how the encounter with participants' voices instigated changes in my own perspective in a similar way that the photo-elicitation interviews enabled participants to review and re-interpret their own experience. I will return to analyse the influence of my personal experience on the research in Chapter Nine and Ten.

Narrative and biographical approaches

Narrative research has been used widely since the second half of the 20th century (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008). Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2008) have identified two main periods in narrative research. After the Second World War, humanistic approaches were prioritised and a more holistic approach to human experience was used as a way of 'speaking back' to the predominance of positivism and empirism (See for example Bertaux, 1981; Bruner, 1990; Polkinghore, 1988). In the last part of the century, a second wave of narrative studies is represented by post-structuralism (Barthes, 1977; Derrida, 1977, 1985; Foucault, 1972; Todorov, 1984) and postmodern theories (Lyotard, 1984).

The main differences between these periods is that early narrative approaches connected narratives to the construction of personal identity and human agency. They were, however, still predicated on the notion of a singular, unified subject. The latter approach considered that narratives had the potential to explore a range of problematic and fractured subjectivities. In this respect, late twentieth century approaches were less concerned about personal identity and more focussed on the ways through which social processes shape language and as a consequence, subjectivities. As Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2008) argue, in the early 20th century, the subject tells a story whereas in the latter part of the century, "the storyteller does not tell the story, so much as s/he is told by it" (p. 3).

Thus, poststructuralists did not consider that narratives reflected the essence of individuals but that they exposed social patterns that could be expressed through discourse. These theorists emphasized the study of the social conditions or practices that produce discourses and the way these reflect the impact of power relations within society (See for example Foucault, 1972, 1977). As a consequence they tended to be indifferent to notions of individual agency (Squire et al., 2008) or in narrative terms, they tended to be less concerned with the concept of "authorship" (Burkitt, 1998).

Dialogism can be located in a third category of narrative studies which builds a bridge between humanistic approaches to narratives and those based in the discursive analysis

as social structures. The dialogic approach clearly does not share the humanistic idea of a singular continuous subject whose identity is expressed through the narrative. There are overlaps with post-structuralist approaches in terms of the framing of social discourse, power and context. However, in contrast to post-structuralism, dialogism does not consider discourse as something that is disconnected from life. Discourse is situated in the act of communication. Within the act of communication the author does exist and is active in the use of different speech genres that frame the conversational context (Burkitt, 1998). The “author” is also reflected in the use of languages, both in their unique and local specificities and in what Bakhtin calls “style” (Bakhtin, 1986a). These are comprised by gestures and emotions amongst other things, all of which emerge from the specific social context.

Accordingly, in this study, I do not use a conventional “content analysis” (Newby, 2010) in which discourse is crystallized in a single collective voice that “floats” over concrete subjects. I consider that individuals have their own particular approach to their learning experiences and that they are able to combine social discourses in a way that is consistent with their own biographies. Hence, in this study I tried to balance collective narratives with the individual variations that each participant brings to the discourse. These personal variations were visible during the interviews, in the structure of the narratives and in the way they combined a variety of sometimes contradictory discourses. The use of the concepts of chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981) and a “field of interlocutions” (Larrain & Haye, 2011) allowed me to combine individual and collective discourses in the analysis. I will describe these in more detail later, when I address the analysis process.

The second aspect to consider is that narratives can be analysed in terms of their structure, context or content. In the field of education, for example, new approaches to narratives have emerged such as “narrative learning” (Goodson, Gert, Biesta, & Adair, 2010), “narrative pedagogies” (Goodson & Scherto, 2011) and “biographicities” (Alheit & Daussien, 1999). For these authors, narrative is conceived as a learning field in itself and is described as, “the ways in which people learn from their lives ‘in’ and ‘through’ the stories they tell about their lives” (Goodson et al., 2010, p. 3). However, in terms of narrative analysis, these studies, which are mainly influenced by humanistic

perspectives, focus on the structure of the narrative. Through the analysis of the narrative structure, they aim to expose the dispositions and orientations to learning that people have as part of their identity.

In contrast, my approach includes an analysis of the context, content and some aspects of the participants' narrative structures. The context of the interview, which is central in a dialogical perspective, is included as one of the main aspects of the narrative analysis. However, as a study of imagined social capital this was also an analysis of the narrative content. The analysis of the content reveals a scenario (expressed in images and discourses) in which participants disclose their main learning experiences. Through verbal or visual images the participants provided information through their narratives, the physical and social boundaries of their imagined social capital. Finally, some aspects of structure are also included in my analysis. For example, the moments during the narrative when specific topics emerge or when participants reiterated particular themes throughout their story-telling provided me with data that allowed me to distinguish the position that participants took in the dialogue and their use of specific discourses.

Selecting participants

As stated in Chapter Two, this study explores the differences between people's perspectives of educational transitions in two nations, taking into consideration social, cultural and educational differences. It was important to select two groups with relatively similar positions in both countries to avoid too many variations that could have made the comparison excessively complex. By similar positions, I refer to similarities in parents' educational levels, similar positions in the socioeconomic structure, similar ages, university programme, university type and ethnicity. Twelve participants in each country participated in the study. In the following section, I detail the criteria used to select students in order of importance and the characteristics of the final sample.

Family educational level: The main criterion for selecting participants was that they were first generation university students. None of the participant's parents had

university experience (complete or incomplete). In terms of educational qualifications, there were some differences between Chile and New Zealand that respond to the differences between both countries. As described in Chapter Two, the boundary between vocational qualifications and school qualifications is less clear in New Zealand than in Chile. In Chile, students need to have a secondary school certificate to access a tertiary trade qualification whereas in New Zealand students can access this without having completed school. As a consequence, in the selected sample, there were no parents with tertiary qualifications in Chile, while in New Zealand there were three students with parents who had achieved some sort of tertiary qualification such as an apprenticeship or other trades qualification.

Participants' parents in Chile tended to have lower levels of education than participants' parents in New Zealand. One explanation for that is that Chile has a very unequal income structure but a high level of intergenerational educational mobility (the possibility for children to access better education and incomes than their parents is high) (Torche, 2005). In contrast, New Zealand has a more equal income structure but a lower level of intergenerational mobility (OECD, 2012). The differences between countries that participants' families showed reflects, in part, these different levels of intergenerational mobility.

Family occupations: First generation university students are commonly associated with low income groups. However, as stated in Chapter One, some studies have demonstrated that parents' educational levels have an influence on students' transitions that goes beyond the socioeconomic group of belonging (Statistic Canada 2002, as cited in Thomas & Quinn, 2007). In this study, I connected variables that have been considered close in origin; namely, "working class" families and "first generation university students" (Thomas & Quinn, 2007). Being of working class origin is not the same as having a uniformly low level of income. Income levels can vary according to different occupational structures or particular circumstances. Working class origins are rooted in certain family histories associated with a particular habitus. I assumed that some occupations represent a habitus that defines their distance or proximity to the academic sphere. Occupations that do not demand high levels of literacy skills have less probability of acquiring a high level academic habitus. I then selected "working class"

families considering a group of occupations which are not given in the university and which are on the lower categories of the salary scale.

To select parental occupations in New Zealand I used the “New Zealand socioeconomic index (NZSEI)” (Galbraith, Jenkin, Davis, & Coope, 2003). The NZSEI is based on a “returns to human capital” model of stratification (Galbraith et al., 2003, p. 6) that relates age, education, occupational SES and income. The resultant scores are scaled on a continuum ranging from 10 to 90, in which occupations have 10 as the lowest and 90 as the highest socio-economic score. Participants’ parental occupations in New Zealand are located in the lower half of this scale.

For Chile, I used the New Supplementary Income Survey [Nueva Encuesta Suplementaria de Ingresos, 2012], which was undertaken by the National Institute of Statistics [Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas]. This annual Survey includes a description of ten different occupational categories according to their average income. Participants’ parents worked in the categories that were identified as “non-qualified workers”.

Future teachers: All of the participants invited to join the biographical exploration aspect of this study were enrolled in a Bachelor of Teaching (BTeach) or Graduate Diploma of Teaching degree programmes. Future teachers were selected considering that this is one of the main study options in Chile for working class, first generation students (Castillo & Cabezas, 2010). It was also considered that learning is the participants’ main field of study so this could potentially enrich their reflection about their learning experience during the process.

All of the students were enrolled in their second, third or fourth year of university study. I chose to exclude first year students because I sought participants who had acquired a level of familiarity with the academic environment, were able to persist in their studies and could evaluate their secondary experience with a degree of temporal distance.

Former schools: The New Zealand and Chile education systems have a mix of private and public educational providers. This means that there is considerable variation within the educational provision of each nation. I considered that it was important to include

diverse types of learning routes that first generation students follow. In both countries, some families or students had studied in more prestigious schools and had achieved a higher level of educational attainment. Other students had gone to school in their residential zones and had developed their university aspirations after leaving school. For this reason, I included participants who had attended different types of schools in the sample. Therefore, this study included a diverse sample of the different pathways that first generation students have in which to reach university. In both countries I excluded private independent schools, considering that they represent the top wealthiest social groups. The schools included were:¹⁹

- a) Low and high decile state schools in New Zealand.
- b) State (Scientific-Humanistic) schools in Chile.
- c) State (Vocational) schools in Chile.
- d) State- integrated-schools in New Zealand.
- e) Private voucher Scientific Humanistic and Vocational schools in Chile.

Age: Considering that it was a biographical study, it was desirable for the group to have a similar generational experience, in relation to their secondary school memories. In New Zealand, participants were students who had studied under the NCEA qualification system, which influenced their educational experience. This system was launched in 2002. In both countries, participants who were invited to join the study were under the age of 27 years. However, the recruitment process in New Zealand took a long time and in the end, I invited one student who was 29 years old at the time of data collection. This participant was the only exception to the age criteria (see Table 5.1).

Gender: I wanted a similar proportion of females and males in both countries to distinguish gender differences in the final analysis. In Chile, six men and six women were interviewed. However, in New Zealand, ten women and two men were interviewed. One of the aspects that made it difficult to achieve a more balanced group of men in New Zealand was the larger proportion of women within teaching

¹⁹ For more details about school types in both countries refer to the Glossary and Chapter Two.

programmes. The advantage of this sample is that it enabled me to deepen the female perspectives of learning experiences in New Zealand. However, this difference in the gender balance between both countries is a limitation to consider when comparing the findings in both countries.

Table 5.1: Participants' characteristics in Chile and New Zealand.

Chilean participants' family characteristics							
Name	School	School area	Mother's Occupation	Mother's education	Father's occupation	Father's education	Siblings at university
Dario	State	S/H	Stay at home mother	Secondary	Blacksmith	Secondary	No
Julieta	State	S/H	Saty at home mother	Primary	Cleaner	Primary	No
Rodrigo	State	Voc	Cleaner	Primary	Driver	Primary	No
Marcela	State	S/H	Nanny	Secondary	Printer	Primary	No
Franco	State	Voc	Cooker	Primary	Carpenter	Secondary	No
Rodrigo	Private	Voc	Stay at home mother	Primary	Farmer	Secondary	No
Mónica	Private	S/H	Stay at home mother	Primary	Driver	Secondary	Yes
Muriel	Private	Voc	Street seller	Primary	Labourer	Primary	No
Alejandra	State	S/H	Stay at home mother	Primary	Mason	Primary	No
Carol	State	Voc	Nanny	Secondary	-	-	Yes
Camilo	State	S/H	Nanny	Secondary	-	-	No
Pablo	Private	S/H	Stay at home mother	Secondary	Miner	Primary	No
New Zealand participants' family characteristics							
Hine	State	7	Stay at home mother	NCEA1	Labourer	NCEA1	No
Ruby	State	3	Odd jobs	NCEA1	Mechanic	NCEA1	No
Grace	State	8	Stay at home mother	NCEA2	Farmer	NCEA3	No
Jessica	Integrated	10	Dance instructor	NCEA3	Printer operator	NCEA1	Yes
Chloe	State	9	Odd Jobs	NCEA1	Shop manager	NCEA3	No
Sophie	State	8	Odd Jobs	NCEA3	Bus controller	NCEA3	No
Lily	State	2-6	Odd Jobs	NCEA2	Farmer	NCEA2	No
Amelia	State	10	Accounting	NCEA2	Seller	NCEA2	Yes
Evie	Integrated	10	Odd Jobs	NCEA3	Carpenter	NCEA3	No
Bronwyn	State	9	Receptionist	NCEA2	Builder	NCEA2	No
Alan	Integrated	8	Odd Jobs	NCEA3	Printer operator	NCEA2	No
Adrian	State	4	Father's assistant	NCEA2	Mechanic	NCEA3	No

Ethnicity: I decided to focus on Mestizos²⁰ (non-indigenous) students in Chile and Pakeha (European descendant) students in New Zealand. Both are the largest and predominant ethnic group in each country. In doing that, I wanted to make a comparison between two groups located in a similar position in both countries. Beyond that, working class Pakeha students have not been commonly considered as a targeted group for educational studies in education in New Zealand (Strathdee, 2013). I considered that this research could make a small contribution to make more visible these students' specific perspectives. Finally, ten Pakeha students and two Pakeha/Māori students were included in New Zealand and twelve Mestizos students were included in Chile (see Table 5.1).

Participant recruitment and the interview process

The recruitment process included two universities in Chile and four universities in New Zealand. I contacted the Ethics Committee at Victoria University as a first step and sent them an information sheet stating the details of the research process. After obtaining ethical approval, staff members in the Faculty of Education of the universities involved were invited to give their consent for me to approach their students. I approached students during class sessions, giving a brief explanation of the research and delivered a questionnaire (See Appendix 6). Through the questionnaire, students filled in some general data about occupations and educational levels within their respective families, and expressed their interest to participate in the research, stating their name, email and/or phone number. On some occasions, staff members themselves sent the questionnaire to the students using on-line facilities. In that case, students contacted me if they were interested to participate in the study.

After stating their interest on the questionnaire, participants were emailed to be invited to the **initial interview**. This was a ten minute interview. During this meeting, I explained to the participants with more detail who I was and gave them the Participant Information sheet, which outlined the research aims, activities involved and the expected time

²⁰ In Chile, approximately 6% of the population recognise themselves as indigenous (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas. INE, 2013), however, a big part of the population come from a mixture between Spanish colonizers and indigenous, called "mestizos". They are usually referred to as non-indigenous in research.

commitment (See Appendix 1). The participants were told that they would receive a gift-card as an acknowledgement of their time. If they were interested in joining the study, they were asked to sign the consent form and were then given the “Guidelines for the photographic recording” (See Appendix 5). These guidelines explained that they had to take pictures of their most valuable learning experience during their time at school and university. Participants were asked to go away and take photographs that represented aspects of their secondary school and university experiences. If they did not have a camera to take pictures, they were provided with one. Some participants lived far from their former schools or they were not willing or able to return to them. In this case, I offered them the option of taking photographs that were metaphorical representations of their learning experiences. These pictures could not include identifiable people and participants had to use their creativity to represent people important to them. They also could collect pictures from the past (personal, family or photos in the public domain) or other kind of images such as drawings, photos from blogs, webs or reviews, or others that they would want. To construct the storyboard they could bring to the interview some sound or music. I also stated that what participants expressed about the pictures was more important than the pictures themselves. Participants were invited to express their thoughts about the absent pictures, those that they would have liked to take but could not (See Appendix 5).

After taking these photographs about school they had a first interview (I discuss the interview stages in the next section of this chapter). Then, they were asked to take pictures of their university experiences and they came to a second interview with those pictures (also discussed later). Finally, they constructed a storyboard with the software window movie maker with a selection of the most significant pictures in school and university; they chose the pictures` sequence, the title, credits and music (if they had brought some).

At finishing the individual interviews, all of the participants in each country met for a group interview. Eleven participants attended the group interview in Chile but only four in New Zealand and this was due to the geographic spread of the universities included in the study.

Photo-elicitation interview and the use of the storyboard

“Auto-driven photo elicitation interviews” (Clark, 1999 as cited in Clark-Ibañez, 2007, p. 173) consist of inviting people to produce their own visual record of their experiences. After that, they review the images during the interview, and offer their interpretations of them.

Photo-elicitation approaches had three main advantages for this research. Firstly, during the interview the interviewees focused on the photographs rather than the interviewer. They spoke mainly to their own experiences that were reflected in the images. As the interviewer, I sat beside and slightly behind the student and occasionally asked some prompting questions that were intended to guide their reflections. Therefore, participants assumed an active role, because they were conducting the interpretative process themselves (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). This avoided the hierarchical characteristics of conventional face to face interviews in which the interviewees, to some extent, were under the control of the interviewer’s questions. In these cases, some features of the interviewer such as academic roles, gender, age, ethnicity or other can intensify their influence preventing the emergence of certain themes.

Secondly, photographic images enable participants to concretize and externalize their own experiences. Thus, a reflective process can be developed around concrete and material products which at the same time have a strong evocative power. The interviewee confronts his/her experience in two different moments; when s/he is taking the pictures and when s/he is interpreting them. There is a double reading process of the visual product, which enriches and deepens the interpretative process.

Thirdly, pictures are an important source of analysis themselves. They define and clarify the most important spaces, environment, colours and people who influenced the experience. They also define the perspectives taken when the participants physically construct the photographic images. The recurrence of images, the presence of human figures within them and the position that people take behind the lens (distance, angle, etc.) are all aspects through which people give hierarchical structure, distribution and organisation to their representations of certain topics.

Finally, the use of other visual devices other than pictures, such as photo-diaries, videos and web pages, have been increasingly applied to social research (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). Young people come from a cinematic culture based on digital supports through which they express the multiple global and local discourses that influence their lives (Tinkler, 2008). Thus, statics and single images may not be sufficient to express participant subjectivities and collective identities. Through creative visual products based on image composition, participants in research have more time and perspective to deepen the reflective process (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). They can review more than once their images to re-signify them in relation to other pictures or elements under analysis. In this case, the significant information is not only restricted to the images themselves but to the ways they are “framed” (Pink, 2001, as cited in Allen, 2009) by each participant.

Thus, in this study I did not only analyse participants’ reflection during the reviewing of the different pictures but I also analysed the final assembly they made of a selection of the pictures through a storyboard. I chose a storyboard because this technique provided the opportunity to construct a picture’s sequences as a representation of a timeline that enabled participants to link the school and university periods in only one visual product. Moreover, the storyboard is a visual product with clear frames. Through credits and titles participants in this study created a more formal and consolidated discourse (through a personal piece of “art”) to represent their biographical experience. In this process, they prioritised one discourse over others to show who they are as learners. I will return to the use of the storyboard later in this chapter.

Interview goals

First interview

The first interview took approximately one and a half hours and had two main goals:

a) To establish the participants’ educational trajectories. I explored aspects such as the family educational background and family occupations, family influence on educational

decisions, the school and tertiary programmes attended, the reasons to select them and to change from one to another if it was the case (during school and after school); and,

b) To show and interpret the visual images of the participants' most valuable learning experiences at secondary school (See Appendix 3).

Second interview

The second interview took approximately one and a half hours and was held one or two weeks after the first interview depending on the participant's availability. I developed a set of questions after the analysis of the first interview (See Appendix 3) that allowed me to make direct connections between secondary and tertiary education experiences and also to develop a final outline of each participant's narrative. This second interview had two main objectives:

a) To explore the participant's most valuable learning experiences after secondary school using the same focus as the first interview.

b) To construct a storyboard. They were asked to select the most meaningful images but also to find connections between them. They included a title, credits and durations for each picture, some of them also brought a music as a soundtrack. All of the participants were asked to identify the most valuable elements of their learning narrative and the connections between them.

The group interview

The two most common forms of group interviews in qualitative research are discussion groups and focus groups. Discussion groups (Ibañez, 1979) gather a collective opinion about a social issue, beginning with a starting question, and keeping researcher-intervention to a minimum. Focus groups (Vaughn, Jeanne, & Sinagub, 1996) are structured according to a previously designed pattern of questions around a selected topic (for example, a marketing product, a political issue, a specific cultural conflict, etc.); participants' responses are elicited by the moderator. Discussion groups or focus groups are used to interview several groups simultaneously to distinguish common patterns in a specific social discourse. In my study, the group interview was used with only one group of participants and included students who had been part of a previous interview. The conversation was mainly aimed at gathering opinions about the preliminary interview

outcomes rather than to elicit a collective viewpoint about an external social issue. Considering these characteristics I chose to call this technique a group interview to differentiate it from the other types of techniques described above.

The group interview was conducted through a series of semi-structured questions that were based on the preliminary findings of the photo-elicitation interviews that I conducted with individual participants. The aim of the group interview was to collect a collective discourse about the learning experiences. This was important because they had met each other as part of this specific study and to this extent under the collective identity of first generation university working class students. This provided me with data that allowed me to make a preliminary identification of the general features of participants “imagined social capital” in each country and secondly, to ascertain whether I had correctly identified the main critical events of their trajectories that had emerged from the one-to-one interviews. Participants were invited to respond to the outcomes of this preliminary analysis and share their perspectives about it. Consistent with a critical approach, this gave the participants an opportunity to hear about how I was handling data and also to hear about some initial outcomes of the analysis. They were invited to give feedback on these matters.

Interview questions

In this study, the question that guided the participants in the photographic exercise was: *What were your most valuable learning experiences in secondary school and university?* With this question I hoped to discover the students’ most meaningful experiences of learning. Meaningful experiences are those that are related to a sense of belonging to people or places which are, as was described in Chapter Four, the elements that shape imagined social capital and learning ecologies.

During the research process I used different types of interviews as a way of avoiding the risk of using “monoglossic” (Bakhtin, 1981) discourses when interpreting participants’ experiences. Shifting from one position to another was a way to challenge my power

position as the researcher. At the same time, these different positions tried to capture the polyphonic features of participants as part of this research. I used one-to-one interviews in which my role was more predominant conducting the interpretation of pictures according to a set of predetermined questions. When using the storyboard, participants “progressed” to a higher level of control over the process composing their own ensemble of pictures. In fact, sometimes when they needed to have a moment to think about the picture’s order or the title, I used to leave them alone for some minutes in the room and came back to see the final product. Finally, during the group interview I put myself, to some extent, under a participant’s evaluation, asking them their opinion about the preliminary analysis I had made of their individual interviews. I considered that changing from one power position to another would be an opportunity to let them know that their experience required a double or triple reading process to be valued for its richness and depth. I assumed that each of these moments was a situation in which both, participants and I, discovered new dimensions of the topic under analysis. I followed then a dialogical approach which states that questions are not just a way to report the experience but mainly they are a way to “instigate changes” (Frank, 2005, p. 969) of perception about their own experience, also of the researcher and the researched. The analysis showed some of the differences between the discourses that emerged in each interview about the same experiences (biographical learning experiences).

The interview allowed the participants to place themselves in multiple subject positions with regard to their own interpretations of the images. I mentioned above the “double reading” process that the photographic record exercise permitted. There was also a triple reading process when they finished the storyboard and had constructed a final synthesis of school and university experiences. During the second interview some participants uncovered connections between their secondary and university transition experiences that they had not considered before. By giving a title to their storyboards they were able to identify what Bakhtin calls the “super addressee” (Bakhtin, 1986a), their main addressee in the dialogue and the main social voice from which they speak. In some cases, the title also expressed the participants’ awareness of time, change and educational and personal progression that surrounded the narrative. Credits were also part of the utterance. These credits recognised the people that the participants wanted to present as the key actors in their educational transition. The credits reflected the community of

belonging in which participants felt their educational transition took place. Both, credits and titles, helped participants to express the predominant narrative position they took when narrating their learning experience.

During the interview I used a series of prompts which allowed the participants to re-position their interpretation if they wished. For example I asked: *“According to what you are telling me and the pictures you are showing it’s like university would have acted as a sort of political school for you? Please tell me if I am wrong or right?”* In that case, they could agree with this interpretation if they chose and were able to enlarge on it. Alternatively, they could move away from the interpretation that I offered by identifying nuances that I had not previously noticed or even questioning my interpretation. In these instances they were able to provide a new interpretation. These questions helped me to better define the participant’s position in the dialogue and allowed me to distinguish how and when they used different types of discourses.

The group interview was another type of “third reading” of the data. I included some questions that interrogated their position with regard to some of the more general aspects of the system, such as the qualification system, the learning choices available to them throughout their transitions, and their future job expectations. However, I also asked questions like: *“Drawing on the interviews, I think that your secondary school experiences are more significant than your university experience. Do you agree or you don’t agree with that?”* By answering this sort of question, the participants had to find a position within the dialogue with their peers. This enabled me to identify one or more positions with regard to this issue. The group interview also provided me with an opportunity to identify the agreement which the participants tried to achieve in relation to the questions as a sort of single or predominant collective voice. These agreements or predominant voice define participants’ transition from an individual discourse to a collective discourse.

Narrative analysis

The research questions presented in Chapter One refer to two main elements of this study. On one hand they refer to participants’ **institutional trajectories**, the structures, programmes, people and learning settings that support educational transitions. On the

other hand, the participants' perspectives of their own biographical continuities based on their **learning experiences** are also a feature of this study. These two dimensions were embedded in the analysis of participants' narratives. The main data obtained in this study came from four key sources: the analysis of the interview situation, the images collected by participants, the storyboard and the participants' oral narratives.

Interview context

Firstly, I collected the comments that I had written after each interview about the interview context. For example, I described each participant's attitudes when being contacted to be interviewed, some aspects of their gestures that expressed some sort of emotion or engagement with the process and their attitude when the process finished. This section of the analysis was important to identify the predominant narrative position of each participant when describing their learning experience.

The analysis of interviews

In the second stage of the analysis I used the qualitative analysis software NVIVO, which organizes qualitative data into different "nodes". The nodes enabled me to construct a thematic distribution of the data excerpts. The nodes I used to group the data of each interview were:

- a) Trajectory: The family history and the main social and institutional circumstances that influence their decisions about their biographical learning.
- b) Chronotopes: Summarised the narrative positions that participants took when they narrate their experiences. These are expressed through titles and credits of the storyboard and the main values or aesthetic perceptions that are expressed with regard to learning across the narrative.
- c) Main milestones: This was a way to profile the key moments across their biographical learning experiences which, according to participants, influenced their biographical learning experience (changes of institutions, graduations, moments of entry to tertiary education and other significant moments).

- d) Institutional representations: This was the way participants describe educational institutions, the institutional environment, the educational process, people, and institutional identity.

Re-story the interview

The third stage of the analysis was to re-story the interview. The term to “re-story” refers to the process of integrating some of the information of the interview in a new and shorter piece of text. This resulted in three linked pieces of texts based on three dimensions: interview context, trajectories and chronotopes (See examples in Appendix 7). These stories were based in part on the NVIVO nodes and in part on additional information I had registered during the transcription process.

Analysis across narratives

The final stage of the analysis was to identify the bridges and coincidences of participants in each country, between interview contexts, trajectories and chronotopes (described below in more detail). Thus, I moved from examining the individual narratives to looking at collective narratives which I saw less as fixed categories than as a narrative convergence. To achieve that goal I constructed two matrices of analysis: one for “trajectories” and one for “imagined social capital” and “learning ecologies”. In the first matrix I categorised the data according to the most recurrent barriers and milestones along the “educational trajectory” that emerged from the interviews. In the second matrix, I categorized the data according to the main topics that emerged from the chronotopes which enabled me to identify the thematic convergences (the main forms of imagined social capital and learning ecologies) in each country. This process finished with labelling these convergences with specific headings identifying, such as “social cause” or “cultural diversity”.

The analysis of trajectories

This section of the analysis involved data relating to a participant’s family and the influence of their family in their educational decisions. This was a description of the participant’s educational (and working) trajectory, the educational institutions that s/he attended, the decisions, opportunities and choices s/he made or found along the way.

I viewed the narratives as a testimony through which the participants described their experiences as a journey to the university. I saw educational transitions as a continuous series of decisions, opportunities and strategies through which the participants used the educational system to achieve their goals. The family was a crucial starting point that influenced the participants' opportunities, aspirations and expectations and shaped their specific trajectory into the future. The analysis revealed two main aspects of the transition. Firstly, the different teaching strategies, teachings programmes, assessment systems, financial support systems, and other aspects of the educational system, played the most important role in the transition. Secondly, the strategies that participants used to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the system were also important. In some cases, these strategies were deployed to overcome the institutional barriers they faced on their way to university. Therefore, the analysis provided a comparative perspective of the effectiveness of each national education system in supporting educational transitions from the participants' early years through to the present.

In this case, I use the notion of trajectories instead of the notion of transitions because the focus was on the influence of the institutional structures in each educational system and how this shaped the educational opportunities that participants found along the way. I draw on the notion of "social trajectory" (Bourdieu, 1984). For Bourdieu, the biography starts with the time and place of birth whereas the social trajectory has a previously defined starting place based on the amount and structure of capital that a person has when s/he is born. Family is the most influential factor in this case (Davila, Ghiardo, & Medrano, 2005, p. 118); the capital that emerges as a result of one's origins defines the "range of trajectories" that the social system "offers" to an individual in the future (Bourdieu, 1988, p.108).

The analysis of chronotopes and imagined social capital

The second part of the analysis refers to transition as a learning experience. To distinguish the main aspects of this experience, in each interview, I used the notion of "chronotope" created by Michael Bakhtin's (1981) to undertake my analysis.

Chronotope literally means “time and space”. It expresses the intrinsic connection between time and space within one discourse: “time and space are materialized through the chronotope, both elements become only one unit tying the general meaning of the narrative” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 254).

Most narrative analyses attempt to identify the narrative plot (Poolkinghorne, 1995), which is underpinned by the sequential and organizational principles of the narration, and framed by a clear beginning and conclusion. However, a chronotope is different from the plot because it is not structured in a linear sequence and it is not shaped by a clear beginning and conclusion. The events within the chronotope express the most important elements driving the time of the narrative. As Bakhtin (1981) states:

It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the [...] representability of events. And this is so, thanks precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers. The time of human life of historical time that occurs within well delineated spatial areas. (p. 250)

One significant factor in this analysis is that the chronotope expresses what Bakhtin calls the “image of men” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 105) or the way through which an individual is expressed through a series of spatial and temporal milestones all of which have “ideological implications” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 105). For instance, the influence of class distinctions on identity, or the connections between private spaces and institutional spaces have chronotopic implications because they shape the image of the individual in terms of representations of time and space within the narrative.

Because chronotopes are not only temporal but spatial, the use of images provides a clear representation of those people and scenarios which create time-space connections. The images tend to situate the meaning of learning experiences, not as a sequential story but as a knot that ties them up.

Three main elements that I used to identify the chronotopes in each narrative were as follows:

- a) The degree of recurrence in the participants' narratives with regard to the relative value or aesthetic perceptions of their educational experiences. This was evident in recurring sentences or words that participants repeated when describing different moments or situations.
- b) Images that summarized the participants' experiences. After each interview participants were asked to select three pictures from each period (school and university) which they felt were a good summary of their experiences.
- c) The title of the story board was one of the main elements I considered to identify the chronotopes because this grouped all the images and events into one single representation of their experience.
- d) The credits define the social sphere (super addresse in terms of Bakhtin, 1986a) in which the chronotope is mainly located.

The chronotope integrates the main images and voices which connect the narrative as one unit, excluding other less significant elements. Accordingly, chronotopes express and connect the value that relationships have for each participant to their ideological representation of his perspective of learning. They are the main way of identifying the different forms of "imagined social capital" and "learning ecologies" that the participants collectively constructed during the one-to-one interview.

In dialogical terms, the way to distinguish the situated location of imagined social capital can be associated with the notion of "Field of interlocution" (Larrain & Haye, 2011). An utterance should not be understood as a single position but as "the engagement among several position-taking movements" (p. 49). The field of interlocution refers to the utterance process as a position taken in a field of tension between several perspectives. This is a notion that evokes the notion of imagined social capital, because it understands utterance as part of a web of meanings. As Larrain and Haye (2011) state:

The field of interlocution of any given utterance must be analysed not only as a perceptual field, that is, as a scenario within which a second party is disclosed as an object, but also as a complex social *milieu* that gives positioning towards the other a particular ideological density and multivoicedness. (p. 51)

Thus, the identification of the chronotope is a way of distinguishing the main fields of interlocution in which participants situate their experience. As a consequence, they also draw the analysis towards an understanding of the main types of imagined social capitals that s/he acquired.

This double reading of each individual story was the basis of the analysis (See Appendix 7 for the examples of Sophie, Adrian, Dario and Pablo. For example, the identification of Pablo's educational trajectory enabled me to follow his biography as a series of opportunities, decisions and strategies. This is a biography which also reflects the main features of the Chilean educational system. The different choices he made, such as the selection of a private-subsidized school, whose promises did not eventuate, his decision not to study in a pre-university and his preference for state universities instead of private ones reflect a strategy to deal with a complex educational structure. Moreover, his narrative provided the data I needed to identify some of the main critical points of the structure of transition in each country. In this case, aspects such as the influence of marketing when choosing secondary school or the disorganized system of financial aid were some important aspect provided by Pablo's narrative.

The analysis of the chronotope in turn put the focus on a different aspect of the narrative. For example, in Pablo's narrative, natural landscapes constituted a place of social belonging and a way to connect university experiences with social experiences outside formal educational spaces. Such sites were referred to with sensual and emotional language. The natural landscape images were also able to be read as an oppositional positions to the dominant discourses of education. Such images critiqued the idea that education is only possible within institutions, the idea that learning disciplines are autonomous spheres without connections between them, the idea that competition

contributes to education, and so on. On the contrary, Pablo's perspective describe learning as an holistic and social experience. Thus, the chronotopes define learning ecologies, such as landscapes and natural milestones, which are also spaces of social encounters full of "ideological connotations" (Bakhtin, 1985, p. 105).

Ethical considerations

It is hard to undertake a separate analysis of ethical issues when, from a critical perspective, it is considered that every research step and research action is an ethical action with ethical implications (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The use of research as a tool for social transformation is a clear ethical option. Validity criteria in turn, such as gathering enough data to draw valid conclusions has been described as the "macro level" (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009, p. 490) of ethical process. According to the same authors the "micro level" (p. 490) includes the characteristics of data collection and recruitment process, among others. In this section I will refer mainly to the different stages of this micro level.

This study had two main ethical challenges. Firstly, I had to approach participants through several mediators in the university (academic authorities and staff members), which meant I had to deal with radically different institutional cultures and procedures. Secondly, the research took place in two different countries with different cultures which increased the complexities and ethical dilemmas before and during the process.

During the last decades, professional associations and universities have been doing an effort to create strong and clear ethical regulations in human research. However, these regulations have to consider that ethics is a complex issue dependant on the cultural context in which researches are applied (Pawels, 2008; Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Comparative studies increase the complexity of this problem when they apply similar methods and procedures to different national realities. As a student enrolled at a New Zealand university I had to follow the ethics committee guidelines of my university. However, during the process and in different stages I had different responses, from people in Chile and people in New Zealand to the same procedures.

Doing research in universities should be considered a specific ethical field. Political aspects, like competition between different institutions or even power disputes within the institution can have an influence over the process, facilitating or impeding access to participants. Facing this research process was a challenging one for me and made me reflect on one of the main issues in anthropology: the rapport the anthropologist achieves with the “observed culture”.

Anthropology emerged in the encounter between scientists coming from the western modern world approaching “natives” from non-western cultures. As an anthropologist I was taught to understand the codes of the different culture to find “key informants” or guides who enable me to know the perspective of this different cultural world. However, in my previous experience these different cultures had been indigenous communities, poor suburban communities or small schools characterised for an absent or weak bureaucratic structure and power relation based on charisma more than on professional functions. Until then I had felt that I had special skills to approach these sorts of cultures, mainly because, as an anthropologist and as a person I tend to identify with a predominantly oral and traditional cultural order.

However, this research journey reversed this process. I had to incorporate the codes of highly professionalised cultures such as the New Zealand university system to understand the norms of respect and authority that characterised that particular cultural sphere. This implied a process of adaptation in which the words and expressions used in email communication were the most relevant issue. Throughout the data collection process I learnt how to adjust my Chilean ways in order to engage with New Zealand institutional culture, characterised by a “more intense” politeness and its orientation to written communication.

During this research process, I passed through different administrative processes to obtain institutional consent. Some universities required the ethics committee to give their approval (beyond the initial approval of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at Victoria University) before approaching staff members, whereas others just requested the approval from the Head of the Faculty. One university required me to make a final report of the process after finishing the fieldwork.

After obtaining ethics approval I informed staff members about the stages of the process and students' commitments sending them the ethics approval and the information sheets of the Head of the Faculty, lecturers and participants. In New Zealand, in most cases that was enough for them to invite me to approach students. In Chile, email communication sometimes was not sufficient and it was important to approach lecturers personally to explain the research details.

With regard to the participant recruitment process, the main challenge of the study was to engage participants in a study that required a significant time commitment from them. In this, I confronted an ethical dilemma. On one side, I wanted participants to feel that this research was an important contribution to an understanding of educational systems and an opportunity for them to reflect about their experience. On the other hand, I knew that another sort of reward was fair considering their time spending. Monetary rewards have been widely used in social research (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). However, researchers have to consider that in some cases these can be in contradiction with the expectation to have participants joining the study with an inner and honest motivation. Thus, rewards should not replicate the logic of market forces (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). Social research has to balance the use of appropriate rewards with the treatment of subjects in their dignity as human subject. This is particularly sensitive in the case of studies that recruit working class participants due to the impact that monetary rewards have in their case.

The difference between both countries was also interesting in this case. In New Zealand it is common to include monetary rewards either money or gift cards to engage participants in research. In Chile, this is less common. As I was in the New Zealand context I included a gift card as compensation for the time spent. Although all participants appreciated it, the way that students perceived this gift card was fairly different between the two countries. In Chile, some of the students were surprised to receive this. One let me know that this was not the most important reason to participate in the study. This made me think that I was probably damaging her spontaneous and genuine interest in contributing to the study. In New Zealand, instead, students gave no particular reactions or comments in regard to the gift. However, one university in New

Zealand requested that I delete the information about this “Koha”²¹ from the Information Sheet before consenting for their students to be approached. After finishing this process I concluded that the use of a gift in research is appropriate. However, it is important to tell participants from the beginning that they would be receiving compensation of some kind with clear explanation of both, the monetary contribution and the expected social contribution of the study.

Another critical aspect of this study in regard to its ethical implications was the use of visual methodologies. Visual methodologies have different ethical implications than methodologies based on verbal interviews. The use of photo-elicitation interviews chosen for this study promoted participants’ agency allowing them significant control over the interview process and opened spaces for them to use their creativity (Guillemin & Drew, 2010) that a verbal interview process would not provide. However, the use of images has the potential to identify people publicly making anonymity more problematic than verbal interviews.

Wiles, Coffey, Robinson and Heath (2012) describe the intense debate among visual researchers surrounding anonymity protection. Some researchers (particularly those that use art based approaches) consider that research should use real names. In doing that the authorship over the visual products is recognised. Others consider that using real names “respect respondents right to be seen and heard and ‘give voice’” (p. 45) to historically socially excluded groups.

However, anonymity has been widely accepted among research associations as the best way to limiting potential harm due to the use of information for different purposes than those participants have consented to (Wiles, et al., 2012; Pauwels, 2008). Pauwels (2008) considers that each research context requires its own “assessments of the privacy expectations of the individual concerned” (p. 256), which makes it difficult to apply universal standards to the use of visual methodologies in different contexts. He proposed instead to undertake a “deontological analysis of the particular research project” (p. 256)

²¹ “Koha” is a Maori custom. It refers to a ceremonial gift given to a host at the Marae (ceremonial house). Depending on the context it can be food, money or other possessions. In New Zealand it has been increasingly used as a synonym of “donation”.

and from this analysis apply “general principles of conduct regarding protection of anonymity” (p. 256).

During this research process I attempted to consider the specific problems around confidentiality involved in my study. The critical issue was to find a balance between confidentiality and the expressive possibilities that the study could provide to participants. When inviting people to present some significant aspects of their experience it was important to give them the flexibility to choose the images that represent this experience accurately and creatively. This would allow participants to perceive their participation as an opportunity to obtain valuable insights from the experience. At the same time, it was important to protect the confidentiality of the data, particularly if a third party was included.

The guidelines that I gave to participants (See Appendix 5) stated that the pictures including identifiable people would not be presented in public presentations or public documents. However, I gave participants the opportunity to use pictures identifying people during the research process, understanding that these images were important to express their ideas or feelings. I also considered that their interpretation (discourse) about these pictures was an important aspect to include in the analysis.

Finally, my methodological options were also motivated by an ethical commitment with the possible beneficiaries of the research findings and the use of them. For example, the group interview is a way to inform the participants about some of the preliminary findings of the study and allow them the opportunity to provide feedback. I also included, at the end of the individual interview, a brief explanation about the value of their personal perspectives regarding teaching and learning as a contribution to a more diverse approach to learning in public education policies. Thus, I expected them to finish the process capturing the projections that the use of these methodologies and their participation can have for educational issues.

In Chile, students were more interested in receiving the research outcomes; one of them asked me to send the interview transcription, another saved the storyboard for themselves. In New Zealand, they were less interested in keeping transcriptions or

storyboards for themselves, although some of them were interested in knowing the findings in the future.

However, I think the main ethical challenges of this research are in their future. I am committed to sending a summary of the results to each of the participants involved. My main concern is the validation of research findings by the ones who participated in the research and how accurate they consider those findings to be.

CHAPTER 6:

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES DURING THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

Introduction

As described in Chapter Three, many first generation university students do not follow the academic pathway “naturally”; they need extra support along the way to reduce the gap with students whose parents have more academic backgrounds. First generation students’ educational transitions tend to be more complex and they often have to balance their educational demands with other family or personal demands (Quinn, 2010b).

According to Bourdieu (1973), the level of cultural capital that the family has defines the range of opportunities that are open in the social system for their children. This opens or closes the door to different pathways in the educational system (learning routes and types of schools). Therefore, an educational system designed to widen the opportunities of first generation university students must provide these students with opportunities for them to choose their educational options according to their personal interest, skills and working expectations, rather than constraining these from early on. As stated in Chapter Two, this not only depends on the curricular structure of the system, but also on various other factors that act in synergy to shape transitions for all students; Qualification Systems, school enrolment systems, university entrance systems, financial aid, teaching and learning support, among others.

Thus, to understand student transitions in New Zealand and Chile it is necessary to consider two main factors. Firstly, the institutional structures that influence students’ learning routes throughout their transition from school to the workplace, and secondly, the nature of the learning and social environment provided by educational institutions in each country.

In this chapter I analyse the participants' perspectives of the educational support that the Chilean and New Zealand system offered them. The analysis focuses on the institutional structures that organise and shape transitions from school to university and through to post-university expectations. However, while institutional structures influence, they do not determine the destiny of student progression. The analysis shows how participants with academic ambitions used a variety of strategies to overcome the institutional obstacles they found along the way. The more structured pattern in Chile and the weak support they experienced in most schools led some students to build what I call a 'double transitions' to university. In these cases, the main support to progression were institutions and organisations outside school. In contrast, the New Zealand's educational system, with higher levels of flexibility and mobility, facilitated students to construct educational transitions situated in the school and university environments.

Rough and smooth transitions to university

The starting point of trajectories

As noted in previous chapters, the expansion of the university education has been extremely fast in Chile during the previous two decades, producing a high educational gap between generations (OECD, 2012). The family structure of participants in this study reflects the differences between the two countries. The educational gap between parents and children is higher in Chile than in New Zealand. Only one Chilean participant had both parents with secondary school certificate and no parents had a tertiary qualification. In New Zealand, seven out of twelve had one or two parents with NCEA Level 3 or equivalent.

These differences were expressed in participants' dispositions toward their university studies and educational expectations. In Chile, all participants represented themselves with a positive disposition to study while most of their siblings, younger and older, were less focused on study than they were. Parents and the wider family often put their hopes on one of their children reaching university and these aspirations were placed on participants from an early age.

When they were asked about their achievement at school, some participants from Chile started the narrative from their early childhood days. Three participants (Pablo, Jorge and Julieta) underlined the positive meaning that the experience of learning had for them in their early memories. They noted the pleasure they experienced when learning to read with their parents or observing older siblings going to school, and talking to their parents about their achievements. During these early years they enjoyed learning or they discovered that learning helped them to create positive relationships with others. For example, Pablo and Jorge stated:

Yes, I always liked to learn, I never questioned it, I felt that learning was fun and I could meet people. (Pablo)

My father taught me how to read when I was four. This was a turning point; to be able to access new knowledge on my own through what he taught me. (Jorge)

Accordingly, some of them decided to pursue university studies early on. Four participants decided when they were at primary school that they would go to university (Dario, Julieta, Marcela and Alejandra), while others came to the decision during secondary school while they realised that they could do well at school (Camilo, Pablo, Carol, Monica and Rodrigo). Three of them decided to study at university after leaving school and following some work experience (Muriel, Franco and Jorge). Their main driver to study teaching was connected with a vocation to support other working class students. They wanted to support children like themselves to have better and different educational experiences than they had. Individual motivation, based on the love for a specific discipline was also significant. Salaries and prestige, although important, were not the main motivation. They knew that teaching in Chile has had comparatively lower salaries and less prestige than other academic careers.

In contrast to the Chilean case, the participants from New Zealand can be divided into two groups: those who described themselves as more engaged with their studies (Amelia, Jessica, Tui and Melissa); and those who described themselves as “not-that academic” and who tended to disengage from their studies at school (Alan, Adrian, Steph, Evie and Mabel). Among those in the second group, Mabel and Evie stated:

I didn't put in...much effort in high school as I do now so I was pretty lucky to keep passing. (Mabel)

I didn't study, I hated school, I hated doing all this, it's not me and even my parents and my brother were surprised that I got to third year and I would have graduated.

(Evie)

Only one of the participants described herself as a top achiever at school (Hine). From these initial dispositions, students undertook different progressions in their study engagement throughout high school. The access to university (and teaching programmes in particular) appeared to be a strong motivator to have higher educational achievements (Ruby, Mabel and Adrian and Sophie).

Most participants in New Zealand reported that their parents encouraged them to pursue any type of post-secondary studies that developed their interests and could secure better job opportunities. However, the sort of support that participants received was more irregular than in Chile. Two of them (Hine and Grace) were personally determined to reach university since primary or intermediate school. One participant's (Adrian) mother advised him to get a job and progress within the company instead of pursuing tertiary studies. Participants who were enrolled in integrated state (religious) schools (Jessica, Alan and Evie) were also encouraged by their parents to go to university as the primary tertiary education destination. For all the others, the decision to attend university came during the last years of high school or soon after they had left.

The desire to become a teacher was underpinned by various motivations in New Zealand. Three participants were initially motivated to go to university to avoid low skilled jobs (Hine, Grace and Evie) or a desire to move away from a rural town (Hine). When choosing the teaching programme some were influenced by a love for children (particularly students in the early childhood programmes), a general desire to impact on others' lives, or an interest in one or two specific disciplines. Interestingly, the two participants with one Māori parent (Grace and Hine) coincided with the Chilean participants in seeking a vocation that would allow them to teach other children similar to themselves; rural or Māori children from low decile schools. Income expectations were

also important; for those who obtained a previous certificate (such as a Diploma or another Bachelor of Arts) (Alan, Mabel, Sophie, Adrian and Lily) teaching was considered a safer career option.

Strategies for choosing secondary school

One significant difference between transitions experiences in New Zealand and Chile is that Chilean students and their families had to articulate university aspirations earlier on. As stated earlier, Chile has two secondary school curriculums, one vocational (technical) and one academic (scientific-humanistic), whereas New Zealand has only one secondary school curriculum.

In Chile, there is no zoning enrolment system which means that schools are the ones that decide which students they enrol. First generation working class families can apply to private voucher schools or state secondary schools. Private voucher schools have different pedagogical approaches and they charge study fees. State schools are divided into two categories and can be either prestigious and highly selective (in Chile these are called “emblematic”) or “common” state schools. Prestigious state schools are the state schools with the highest scores in the entrance test (Bucarey, Jorquera, Muñoz & Urzua, 2014). These schools select students according to their primary school marks. Students start state prestigious schools in Year Seven and common state schools in Year Nine. There are only a few state prestigious schools in Chile and they are mainly located in central urban areas. So, while there are a number of schooling options, in reality most working class families are restricted to the common state school or finding the money to pay fees for the cheapest private voucher schools.

As a consequence, Chile has a highly socially differentiated education system. The options for working class families are theoretically wide but practically restricted. Schools select students based on their academic, religious or family profile amongst others. Therefore, families have difficult decisions to make in a context where good options in the state system are restricted and the influence of the private market is strong.

In New Zealand, types of school are less diverse. They are not explicitly differentiated by academic quality, although higher decile schools tend to be more prestigious and obtain better outcomes (such as, scholarships, higher numbers of students with University Entrance Level) (Education Counts, 2014). Fully private schools are an extremely small group and are not affordable for working class families without high family income levels while state integrated schools, funded by the state, have low fees and can be an option for families who endorse the special character of these largely church-based schools.

In the case of Chilean participants in this study, some families from the capital city, who perceived that their children could achieve well, enrolled their children in a prestigious state secondary school with the hope that this could prepare them for the entrance test to reach university. Primary teachers were influential in encouraging parents to select secondary schools that were more academically-focused. Camilo describes one of these experiences:

I had a teacher in primary and my mum was always interested in me going to the university, in my life at school, even if she was too busy [...] and teachers realised that. One teacher [...] suggested that I had to come to this school.

Several of these schools were highly academically selective. For some of the participants this was the first encounter with the influence that school selection procedures have on working class families, as an anticipation of their future job and social opportunities. As Alejandra remembered:

There are so many girls who are not selected and you see all those girls crying, the selected names are on a board, and I said, I can't believe it!, How they can cry just for this? And you see the mothers claiming, I said, what's wrong with these people!?...But I had been selected and I was happy.

In the case of Marcela, despite being a high achiever with university aspirations, she missed the opportunity to apply to a prestigious school, because she did not have enough information about the application process at the right time. As a consequence, she remained in her common state school:

I wanted to be in some [prestigious] school, but I had no idea that applications were in Year Six, I had no idea! I had no friends in these schools. I remembered that my

hairdresser told me, her daughter had applied in Year Six, so I said I am in Year Seven, no way! [...] I'll stay here [...], I can do it myself.

School marks are one of the criterion consider when applying to the university. Participants knew that different schools have different academic demands. This led one participant (Dario) to avoid enrolling at the most prestigious state school, fearing that the high academic demand would prevent him from obtaining high secondary school marks, thus reducing his opportunities to access university:

I know people from the National Institute [the most prestigious state school] and half of them go to university, not all of them [...] because they do not have good marks at school. They may know much more than other person who got 6.0 in other common school, but they will not be able to access university. I saw that and I didn't like it, in my [less prestigious] school something similar happens but not as much so I wasn't so scared.(Dario)

The marketing of private voucher schools also influenced family decisions. This influence was stronger for families which lacked information about the educational system or were located outside the main urban areas. That was the case of Pablo, who lived in a small city on the coast and was enrolled in a private voucher school which aggressively advertised itself as being highly academic:

Their goal was that everyone will get to the university. And that's it! We will train the winners and make a bilingual school, everything neoliberalism offers...everything! (Pablo)

Finally, in Chile, other families chose schools mainly for the values they hold and the desire for their children to access a wealthier environment. This was the case for Monica's family, who chose a religious private voucher school that they could afford in good financial times. However, after their financial conditions declined, she shifted back to a lower income school.

The participants who did not (or could not) access these school choices enrolled in technical schools. Their aspirations were characterised by the setting of a short-term study goal; to obtain a technical certificate enabling them to find a job after school. They

expected that with this certificate they could raise their expectations and possibly apply for some sort of tertiary study afterwards. Most of them went to schools close to home. Some also considered the information they had about the educational quality. Some also used an intuitive approach about which vocational area would be good during the last two years, as Jorge describes:

I hadn't thought about my future, I was in Year Eight and I had high marks to go to any school, but it was September, October and my mum started to push me [...] so I said what are the closest options, this one... this one [...] so I said communications technician has to do with computer networks, ok! I'll do it!, [...] but I didn't give much thought to it.

Muriel, who came from a very marginal background, described the lack of information that her mother had when they needed to choose which school she would go to. Her mother did not even know that public free schools existed. They went out of the suburb to enrol Muriel in the first private voucher school they found.

The differentiated structure of the Chilean system produced educational trajectories strongly influenced by socioeconomic factors and forced students and their families to set educational expectations at an early age. School advertising influenced family decisions and made them choose private voucher schools, particularly in three cases; two participants who lived in rural areas (Pablo and Rodrigo) and one that had a very marginalised and uninformed family (Muriel). Some who lived in the capital had more information and were advised by teachers which enabled them to choose prestigious state schools (Dario, Julieta, Alejandra and Camilo). Finally, those who chose non-prestigious state schools studied there with a sort of resignation that, if they wanted to achieve higher education, their opportunities rested mainly on their individual efforts (Jorge, Marcela, Franco, Rodrigo and Carol).

In New Zealand, the timing of long-term educational decisions is clearly different from Chile. Families and students were not pressured to choose a learning pathway so early in life. As a result, those decisions are influenced by fewer factors than in Chile and external orientation and information is less influential. In New Zealand, the zoning system

appeared to be highly influential. This system places a geographic zone around schools that are over-subscribed and only students residing inside this zone can gain access to the school. From the participants in this study, seven chose the school in the zone (Chloe, Mabel, Ruby, Sophie, Amelia, Adrian and Lily). The main influences on these participants were social and friendships as Mabel describes:

When I was 12, I had a bad experience at school, I got into troubles with the principal, a lot of kids kind of teased me all the time and so I didn't want to go to the same high school as them. That's why I chose to go to a high school where I didn't know anyone. It was a bit rough when I went there.

Only two of the participants were initially determined to follow university studies at the start of high school (Grace and Amy). They chose not to enrol at their local school and applied to enrol at "out of zone", at more prestigious higher decile state schools. They believed such schools would support them in their pathway to university more than a low decile school, as Grace stated:

There was another school 30 minutes closer, my mum wanted me to go to the school because they have more of the Māori aspect. We had to learn more about our culture, but I refused to go to this school because I knew that it was run badly. I didn't want to go there. They don't produce very good students. It was a bit of a fight, but they agreed with me.

Those families and students who chose state integrated schools (Alan, Jessica and Evie) were mainly influenced by religious criteria. In other cases, aspects such as the school's single-sex status, prestige and social environment also influenced their decision.

Comparing the two countries, students in Chile had to deal with a highly complex system with differentiated opportunities and the right of schools to select which students they would enrol. The secondary school selection process had a strong influence on their educational transition following secondary school. As a consequence, the transition to university in Chile depended mainly on student educational choices made long before secondary school, whereas in New Zealand, their educational post-school choices were made during secondary school.

Transitions and strategies during school

During secondary school, several factors influence the practice of social and educational exclusion. The narratives in this study show that curriculum, teaching approaches and school culture affect whether educational aspirations will be widened or restricted.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Chile and New Zealand have two very different curricular models. In senior secondary school Chile has a wider range of learning areas, while New Zealand has focused on giving students the option to select specific single subjects. The participants' narratives in Chile show that the first curricular model is not directly linked to student interest and tends to be more arbitrary and dependant on the way schools structure their broad learning areas. In New Zealand, participants tended to choose what they would study according to their personal interests, although participants in low decile schools had more restricted options than high decile schools.

In Chile, in the case of humanistic–scientific schools, the fact that students chose learning options in a broad range of areas (scientific or humanistic) can lead to them avoiding subjects where they do not achieve well. This decision can be inconsistent with their interests. This was Alejandra's case, who initially wanted to be a midwife, but when the time came to choose a specialization, she realised that if she chose the scientific specialization she needed to do maths but she had low marks in that subject. Finally, she chose the humanistic specialization and decided not to be a midwife. She ultimately decided to study history, a decision influenced by the strong presence of history subjects in the school humanistic curriculum:

The scientific school had all that I wanted - it had biology, chemistry which I liked so much! And it had maths, but I am useless at maths [...] so I said I will take the scientific and I signed it. After three or four days I said, 'no, this is a mistake!' I thought that my marks will put me down; I didn't like maths so I made it short. I talked to the career advisor and I asked her to please give me the other form because I had changed my mind. (Alejandra)

Another factor that created problems for a smooth transition in Chile was the lack of continuity between the assessment system in secondary school and university. Participants need to prepare for the university entrance test which was weighted 70% in the university entrance system. This assessment overlaps with the school assessment demands. Julieta for example, decided not to enrol in a pre-university in the last year of school because she felt she could not cope with the pressure, she finally decided to take a one year gap to do a pre-university course.

Pre-universities are private institutions and this places financial pressure on families during the last year of school. The influence of the market in the field of university entrance test preparation is seen even in public schools. For example, Alejandra had to pay for a compulsory pre-university course on the weekend, in her prestigious public school

[We had a pre-university course on] Saturdays, for Year Twelve and Thirteen it was compulsory, we had to pay to the “parents union”²² to be in the pre-university, but you must go because they marked you, it was weird! (Alejandra)

Factors related to school culture, which valued some learning areas over others, also had a significant influence on participants’ transitions. Artistic learning areas for example, are not considered in the standard entrance test. In Chile, this made some schools undervalue these areas, disadvantaging students who have artistic interests. Some participants also feel that the humanistic area, despite being very relevant for the university entrance test, is less valued than the scientific area by staff members and the school authorities. Such subjects’ undervaluing was noticeable to participants, as Marcela described:

They discriminate against us, one of the pictures talks about that. My group class humanistic-scientific made a project for Books’ day, painting walls, but the ones who painted the walls were the science students, so I asked the teacher, “Why? We are the art class!”, “Why do you privilege them over us?” She couldn’t answer me. I am sure

²² Parents unions are organisations that connect parents from a school to support educational activities (particularly social, recreational and community activities). These ask a modest installment to each family to fund their activities and their heads are usually democratically elected.

that is because they are in sciences. And she whispers, “Yes”, and ask me to cover my mouth.

Julieta for example, who studied in a prestigious school, felt that family pressure led her to choose a science specialization, expecting that she would study medicine after school. However, her favourite teachers were in the humanities, such as the history and Spanish teachers. This was not considered by the school. Thus, despite her remarkable achievements at school and the awards she received, when she left school she felt unprepared to follow university studies and decided to take a one year gap to clarify her future goals.

With regard to technical schools, participants felt that broad learning areas, such as the humanities, tended to be poorly taught and that vocational subjects were prioritised. Thus, their favourite subjects were usually taught in a very formulaic style, which did not engage them. As Jorge stated:

In Year Thirteen we had three different teachers, very bad [...], very bad, [and] authoritarian, he would write and would erase, he would never expand the ideas, he only delivered the content. (Jorge)

With regard to institutional influences, those coming from technical schools said that these schools did not open up university as a possible future for them. These obstacles were related to weak preparation for the university entrance test. When they studied, some of the content of the entrance test was not included in the Technical schools' curriculum (Gysling & Hott, 2010). This changed in 2013. They also lacked information about the procedures to apply for university. Muriel narrated this experience and how she faced it:

I got angry [...] I was never advised by them [that] you could enrol on the internet and the career advisor could enrol you himself, she had not enrolled me, my friends told me that there was an university entrance test and that I also could apply to a grant.

The participant's narrative confirmed one of the aspects that had already been mentioned in the literature, which is the high workload that students experienced during their final

years at school and the weak preparation in technical schools (Gysling & Hott, 2010). However, other aspects such as the hierarchies between different subjects and the influence that this can have on educational transitions have not been sufficiently explored in the literature.

In New Zealand on the other hand, a major aspect that supports educational transitions between school and university is the School Qualification System. As studies about the NCEA system state (Madjar et al., 2009), the diverse assessment options the NCEA system offers students increases their opportunities to achieve well and reinforces their educational expectations. This includes diverse types of assessment systems and learning contexts which widen their options to obtain the credits needed. The fact that the system is aligned with the university entrance system also enables students to focus on the school curriculum and comprehend the system well and its consequences for their future.

As described in Chapter Two, the NCEA assessment is based on internal or external assessments. The first ones are more procedural and give students the possibility to re-sit it more than once. External assessments are more structured and formal. For four participants in this research, internal assessments were very supportive in helping them reach University Entrance Level, particularly because some of these students felt pressure when preparing for external examinations. Others considered themselves not well prepared to use the kinds of academic techniques that these exams required:

One positive thing to say about NCEA is that the opportunity to get credits is not that hard. You can get credits internally and externally through exams, I got most of mine internally, just because that was my strength. I've never been good at studying for exams. It was helpful to get credits and carry them over to the next year, which made it easier for me. So I tried to choose as many subjects in high school so as not to do external exams. Not because I am stupid just because I knew that I would get better marks internally rather than just getting an 'Achieve' doing external exams.

(Amelia)

In other cases, in New Zealand practical assessments were offered through external programmes in schools. A couple of schools had a state programme called the "Gateway

programme” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2013), which offers students diverse pathways to employment and/or tertiary education through workplace learning experiences during school. This programme was taken by two participants who wished to work with children but who defined themselves as “not that academic” and struggled with the external assessments. They considered the programme to have assisted them in acquiring credits and played an important role in shaping vocational and university expectations. Ruby and Evie showed the value of the practical component of these programmes in motivating them to stay at school and progress in their studies:

[The Gateway programme] was good, I loved it, because we did unit standards, in early childhood, so I got credits towards NCEA by doing it. (Ruby)

It can get you inside on how to work, you have to be somewhere on time, you have to be reliable; you have to be efficient, have these intuitive responses. (Evie)

At the same time, the fact that students chose single subjects instead of broad study areas composed by several subjects facilitated the consistency between interest and choices. It also gave the students the option of experimenting with different subjects along their educational journey. During secondary school, the factors that influenced the decision to take subjects were diverse. Most of them were not clear about their post-secondary goals until Year Twelve or Thirteen. Therefore, despite the interest of obtaining more credits, the main reason to choose subjects was an interest in the field, or sometimes family suggestions. Institutional support such as career advisors also played a significant role in some cases to shape their decisions in obtaining credits, as Amelia stated:

I went there [to the career advisor] quite a few times just because I was so confused at the time if I wanted to do communication or education. So I often went there just to hear what she had to say about university.

However, participants also had to deal with the poor resources of low income schools, which restricted the range of options available. For example, one of the participants, Lily, could not take History at school, which was one of her favourite subjects, because the school only offered it by correspondence. Another participant, Reuben, would have liked to have some artistic subjects that were not available when he was at school. In another case, the financial situation of the student herself was an impediment to making decisions

according to her interest. Hine attended a high decile school and could not afford the art resources, which, according to her was a turning point in her educational progression:

The other [important moment] was not being allowed to do Art. I think that would have completely changed what I am studying now, I think I would have done art at secondary school, or just completely gone with Art, but I couldn't because I couldn't afford that. (Hine)

The wider range of possible choices participants had were significant, but so too were some aspects of the school culture. Despite schools differences in approaches and material conditions, students' narratives describe schools predominantly focused on facilitating students to gain credits and providing them with different assessment alternatives. Flexibility is one of the aspects that was most valued, expressed for example in teachers who managed to adjust students' timetables when students needed it. They underlined the flexibility teachers had to enable them to repeat internal examinations or even advocating for them in case they confronted troubles in their application process to university. For example:

I didn't originally have UE [university entrance level] because the school kind of screwed up my NCEA thing and told me that I had UE and my maths credits but I didn't actually have enough math credits. So after school had finished, before I started uni, I think it was January, I had to go into the school and sit unit standards in maths, so I could get uni. (Ruby)

Thus, obtaining the credits to have University Entrance Level in New Zealand was not a difficult issue for most participants. Even those who described themselves as not academically motivated or not clear about their future, managed to obtain the University Entrance level. Amongst the New Zealand participants, only two of them (Evie and Adrian) declared that they had left school without the credits needed to enrol in university. New Zealand participants confirmed some of the findings of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. They considered that the NCEA system is quite easy to manage, either because the learning expectations are simple and structured or because some subjects in particular provided a high number of credits reducing the demands in others. Studies about transitions in New Zealand have stated that managing external examinations is one of the key issues to successfully progress to universities (Madjar et

al., 2010). However, these participants tended to represent internal exams as a sufficient support to obtain the credits needed.


The narratives in New Zealand showed the existence of a consolidated system, expressed in the assessment system, participation in practical experiences and teacher support along the way that facilitated them obtaining the required credits. This system did not make significant difference in the value given to different subjects. However, in some cases, as the literature states (Madjar et al., 2009), the poor conditions of low income schools could damage the opportunities of students to express their real interests, creating obstacles in their preparation for university. The financial problem that affected one low income student attending a high decile school was also an important issue that needs further exploration to understand its potential impact on student transitions.

Double and single transitions to university

When comparing some of the strategies used by students to progress to university from school, Chile and New Zealand showed two different patterns. Chilean students had to redefine their goals along their educational trajectory, in what could be called a “double transition” experience. This is the experience that all technical students had (Jorge, Franco, Rodrigo, Muriel and Carol). They started a technical career two years before leaving school and some of them remained in the field for a while after school, until they decided to shift to a completely different academic career, and prepared for the university entrance test. However, as it is shown in the following narrations, in some cases scientific-humanistic schools were not perceived either as very effective in guiding student interest to the right post-secondary school pathway.

Table 6.1: Connections between secondary school choices and post-school choices for Chilean and NZ participants.

Name	Main subjects studied at school	Subjects studies at university
CHILE		
Dario	Humanities	Spanish teaching
Julieta	Science	Spanish teaching
Marcela	Humanities	History teaching
Monica	Humanities	Spanish teaching
Alejandra	Humanities	History teaching
Camilo	Humanities	Primary teaching/History
Julieta	Science	Spanish teaching
Pablo	Scientific/Humanistic	Music technology/Music teaching
Jorge	Electrician	History teaching
Franco	Cooking	Foundation/philosophy teaching/history teaching
Rodrigo	Sale	Spanish teaching
Muriel	Early Childhood	Early childhood teaching
Carol	Medical care	Propedeutic/Foundation/ Primary teaching
NEW ZEALAND		
Name	Main subjects studied at school	Subjects studies at university
Alan	Physical Education	Drama/Media/Primary teaching (PE)
Chloe	Early childhood/design	Design/Early childhood
Mabel	Media/English	Journalism/English/Graduate diploma
Ruby	Early childhood	BA, BTeach in early childhood
Sophie	English/Classics	English,history/Graduate diploma
Amelia	English	Primary teaching
Adrian	Japanese	Japanese teaching/International studies/Early childhood
Jessica	Biology	Computing/Genetics/Graduate diploma
Hine	Arts/Geography	Primary teaching
Grace	Māori program	Primary teaching/Māori
Lily	English	English, history
Evie	Early childhood	Early childhood.

 **KEY** = significant change in disciplinary focus from school to university

The relative smoothness that characterized the New Zealand system is explained in part by the stronger connections between the main subjects chosen at school and the university programme chosen after school. Even those who took different tertiary or university programmes, these decisions are strongly linked to the learning subjects they

took at school. This clearly establishes the influential role that school experiences have in leading students to their post-secondary school options. Table 6.1 illustrates clearly the differences between Chile and New Zealand, in which New Zealand shows a closer relationship between the choices at school and the university choices. In blue are the ones who chose a different field in school than in university, in grey those who chose similar fields in both levels.

A larger group of students in Chile tended to think that school was not the place that most motivated them to enrol in university (Julieta, Jorge, Marcela, Franco, Rodrigo, Monica, Muriel and Carol). For those students, motivation came from other kinds of institutions or organisations, some of them were part of the educational system, such as university programmes, or pre-university institutions others were work experiences and community-based experiences.

Some of them highly valued the experience of pre-university institutions (Dario, Muriel and Marcela). These institutions, created exclusively to prepare students for the entrance test, provided them with a different learning environment, that was less normative and, as a result, had more approachable teachers. Some of these organisations are university or community-based institutions where they were taught by university senior students. In these places, they saw study as an enjoyable experience and met tutors who they admired and who they shared a strong bond with.

Muriel for example, came from an economically marginalised family in an extremely poor suburb. She had a very negative experience in her private voucher technical school where she had studied as an early childhood assistant but was never motivated to achieve higher expectations. After school, she increased her awareness of her teaching skills and ideas about working in an early childhood centre and community based organisations. These experiences were also useful in reinforcing her expectation to work in a higher position where her potential could be developed. At the same time, her community-based experiences enabled her to realise that her vocation was not only early childhood teaching but she also wanted to work with older people. Finally, she enrolled in a pre-university institution conducted by university students where she experienced for the first

time a motivating learning environment and she could finally achieve the entrance test score she needed:

I found another option to learn, a popular pre-university course, from there comes this desire to study! Stronger, more intense and thanks to this pre-university I could enter university. (Muriel)

Julieta in turn finished her prestigious state school with high achievements but was insecure about confronting the application process. After leaving school, she chose to take a one year gap, and she studied in a pre-university institution and worked. During this year, she became involved in a couple of community church-based activities with children. Through these activities she realised that science was not her main interest and she felt she had a humanistic vocation, which led her to apply to a teaching programme in Spanish.

Sometimes this double transition had begun at school. Carol and Dario were recruited by university programmes when they were at school. These offered low income students alternative routes to university. Carol enrolled in a programme that selected the top 5% achieving students from low income schools and enrolled them in a course at university. The best students from this course would go straight into foundation university programmes regardless of their entrance test score. Dario enrolled in a programme for young people with a teaching vocation. This programme also offered students a course that meant they could skip the university entrance test to enrol in university. They both considered these programmes to be a primary motivation for them to access university.

In other cases, they decided to pursue their studies after negative experiences in the labour force. Those who had come from technical schools had to do a practicum to be certified and sometimes they kept working in the field for a while. That was the case for Muriel, Franco, Jorge and Rodrigo who disliked the exploitative character of the relationships that characterized their working experiences and the lack of intellectual demand that these sorts of jobs involved. University led them to seek university qualifications as a way to keep them away from work that they had disliked or which limited their personal development. As Muriel described:

If you don't have power, it is like they use you, they use you to do the things that they want to do, that other people want to do, I am very active and I give ideas and they use my ideas but I wanted more power. (Muriel)

The experiences of a “double transition” in Chile express the difficult role of the school system in defining student interests and strategies for the future. These difficulties are mainly related to the lack of institutional systems in schools that can accurately identify students' strengths and vocational dispositions, offering them the learning routes and learning support to leave school better prepared.

However, double transitions also show the agency of students in re-working their transitional experiences. Firstly, through organising their own time progression according to their increasing aspirations. And secondly, by using different forms of social and institutional opportunities available to them to support them to achieve their academic goals.

In the case of New Zealand, many participants also re-worked their transition after school. Some New Zealand participants felt unprepared to undertake university studies when they left school. Others were unclear about their actual interests or were just reluctant to be involved in a new educational institution. In these cases, work and travel were significant experiences in redefining their interests. For Evie, Mabel and Grace, work experiences played a similar role to those of participants from Chile, as these experiences led them to reject the demands of manual work, reinforcing their desire to enter a university programme. As Evie and Grace narrated:

I hated working at a supermarket, it's horrible. (Evie)

You get a job, whatever job you get and you work in that job every single day! Doing the same thing, I knew that I couldn't handle that and so what I did is that I had to do it on my own because my family didn't know how you go to uni. (Grace)

Similarly, in both countries, having previous work experiences played a very significant role for those studying early childhood education. The access to practical teaching experiences since leaving school or during a gap time between enrolling at university

enabled them to discover their teaching skills or reinforce their vocation. These experiences were the turning point that made them apply to university. In New Zealand, Evie underlined the role that her boss played in pushing her to further studies:

My boss had pushed me to say you are so right for this job, you should go to university, get your degree and she paid me decent wages, really pushed me. She guided me in the direction of my career, without her and the help of my family I would be nowhere. I would be cleaning rubbish. (Evie)

However, in New Zealand other organisations or experiences outside school and work were far less significant. On one side, this is an expression of the effectiveness of the school to conduct future decisions, on the other side, it demonstrates that informal learning experiences tend to play a less significant role in defining their final interest than was the case in Chile.

Smooth and rough transitions in tertiary education

As discussed in Chapter Two, a system that is responsive to a student's diverse interest, supports them and is easy to understand enables them to anticipate their transition, to be well prepared while also reinforcing their expectations during their educational pathway. Such a system is particularly supportive for first generation students who do not have high levels of academic cultural capital at home.

In Chapter Two, I gave evidence that the New Zealand educational system is less socially segregated than Chile. It has a financial aid system that is easier to access and it gives wider options for students to make their own learning choices and shift from one programme to another. This different structure influences participants' transitions. In New Zealand, eight students did not go straight from school to a teaching programme (Alan, Chloe, Mabel, Sophie, Adrian, Jessica, Lily and Evie) either because they studied in other tertiary programmes, they took some time away from study to work, or because they enrolled in other Bachelor programmes at university. Some of them were unclear about their main career interests, others felt unprepared to cope with the demands of university. However, the system gave them some opportunities during their

transitions into the teaching programme that not only increased their experience but also gave them qualifications.

Reuben, for example, did not obtain University Entrance Level when he left school, and instead had enrolled in an Institute to study Japanese teaching. After some time, he decided to shift to another city and transferred his credits to “International studies” in the “Green University programme”.²³ When finishing this degree, he had some work experience in early childhood centres and this encouraged him to enrol in a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching. All the way along this journey, despite not having the University Entrance level, he was able to study what he wanted and knew that his previous learning would be recognised. He obtained one degree, was about to obtain a new one, and he kept his student loan and allowance along the way. Thus, the system gave him the opportunity to have a changeable transition, transferring the financial aid system between different programmes.

Another student in New Zealand, Evie, struggled during school and did not obtain University Entrance Level. She felt unprepared for university study when she left school. As a consequence, she decided to work in early childhood teaching for two years and finally decided to apply to the university after turning 20, at which age she did not need to have the University Entrance Level to be accepted to university. Another two students (Alan and Mabel), who also felt unprepared to enrol at the university and were unclear about their interests when they left school, enrolled in short tertiary programmes where they obtained certificates in areas they enjoyed. After finishing, they realised that it would be difficult to find a job in these industries and consequently decided to enrol in a Teaching Programme.

In New Zealand, the structure that connects a Bachelor Degree with a one year Graduate Diploma was also something that helps students who leave school without being fully clear about their career interests. The Bachelor degree in this case, offers them subjects that they are more familiar with (English, Classical Studies, History, etc.)

²³ In order to protect the identity of New Zealand Universities, colors have been used: Green, blue, black and white.

when they leave school. Thus, while they are studying they can clarify their future goals and spend only one year studying a Graduate Diploma in Teaching. As Lily describes:

I chose History and English literature. I didn't want to choose anything that I'd never heard of before! [...] I could have done Sociology [...], stuff like that, but I didn't know what Sociology actually was or Anthropology. (Lily)

In Chile, transitions through tertiary education tended to be more challenging. Five students (Julieta, Jorge, Franco, Muriel and Felipe) passed through other experiences before enrolling in the teaching programme. Three of them worked and two enrolled in another Bachelor Degree. Those who had chosen another Bachelor Degree shifted to the Teaching Programme. However, they had to do the University Entrance Test and started most subjects from the beginning. This not only meant a huge time cost but it also had a financial impact. The process of transferring their public loans and grants was difficult. Pablo for example, due to information and orientation problems, lost the grant he had in the first degree programme he had been enrolled in and he had to follow his studies with a public loan:

I came much in advance and the lady told me to do that when I enrol, but the process was not in January it was in September, so when I got there they told me, you should have done it before, so before I had 80% or 90% public grant, but here I don't have it, I have only public loan. (Pablo)

The curricular structure of the teaching programme is also something that can make transitions challenging. In Chile, participants had a restricted range of options to select subjects according to their interests in comparison to New Zealand. This can make students feel that their transition is externally controlled. It can also increase disengagement with the university environment and be potentially demotivating as shown in this discussion from the group interview:

Marcela (History): The fact that my programme is flexible until the fifth semester at least gives you the option to delay it or to bring it forward.

Dario (Spanish): We don't even have the right to do that, everything is structured.

Monica (Spanish): We have a compulsory "optional" course (All laugh!).

In New Zealand, however, the problem tended to be the opposite. Those who enrolled at university right after school felt insecure about their interests or skills and were not sure how to manage the multiple choices the system had given them. Two participants (Ruby and Grace), said that they felt lost in the system and had not been given good academic advice when deciding which papers to take in a wide range of available options. This indicates that career advice services at school should be more effective in introducing students to the university system and helping them to develop their decision-making skills. Ruby, for example, narrated how she made the wrong subject choices during her first year which threatened her motivation:

I didn't know what the hell to do! I had no idea about university courses and what I had to do. I had no idea how my degree was set up. I went to the people who changed your courses or whatever; they just put me into random ones. They go: "This is religious and it is run between these hours". And I got: "Yeah"... just meet the points.

Grace in turn, felt very insecure during her first year, which prevented her from taking some of the specialisations she would have liked to take. After a while she realised that she would have been perfectly capable of coping with those demands but it was too late. This damaged her future career options:

If I had gotten a major in Māori I could have taught it right to high school and I am only going to have an English minor, only to teach juniors. Whereas if I had taken a major I could have taught right through high school, which I would have preferred, but...I didn't even realise. (Grace)

Another factor that hindered the university transition in Chile was the difference the participants saw in the level of prestige between different teaching fields. As I noted earlier, this is also something that they lived during their own schooling. Following the experience they had had at school, in universities they also perceived that disciplines within the humanities were less valued than scientific areas. This clear stratification that they saw in their daily life at the faculty was also connected to their future career expectations. They expected to have a lower salary than other teachers in scientific areas. Marcela, in the group interview, described the different facilities that different learning areas have:

Maths in the teaching university is like cool! You go to the basement, they have a microwave, Nintendo, you go to history and the stuff is falling down! (Marcela, Group Interview).

In New Zealand, early childhood teaching students also tend to feel that the prestige is lower than in other educational sectors. According to them, their careers are seen as less professional than primary or secondary teaching areas. However, in regard to this issue, Reuben described a positive experience at his university. Reuben felt that early childhood students had been treated in the same way as other students and this is expressed in the material conditions but also in the kinds of events offered that bring together all teaching students as a single group. At other universities, differences between learning areas or educational levels did not emerge as a problem in any interview.

With regard to the support that teaching programmes offer, one significant factor to support the educational transitions is the curricular balance they offer between theoretical and practical experiences. I described above in this chapter how New Zealand participants valued practical and work-based experiences at school. In teaching formation, classroom placement gives student teacher an “integrated learning experience” (Wilson & L’Anson, 2006, p.354). Through practicum, universities and students are able to identify potential relational, emotional or group management problems that could stand in the way of students who want to be professional teachers in the future. Teaching placement is also essential for students to develop a reflective approach to practice (Zeichner, 1994), which constitutes one of the main aspects of the pedagogical knowledge.

In both countries, placement experiences are highly valued as an opportunity to define their vocation and learn teaching skills that are otherwise impossible to incorporate in the university curriculum. However, in Chile, some programmes did not include practicum experiences during the first years. In the group interview, Marcela underlined this issue as one of the main disadvantages of her formation:

It's hard for me to understand that you have no placement until fourth year, can you imagine that in fourth year you go into the classroom and you realise you can't do it? What do you do with these four years? (Marcela)

In response to the absence of practical experiences, some participants (Dario, Franco and Camilo) also developed a “double transition” during university, making use of the different opportunities they were offered to acquire teaching experiences which had an important impact in their vocational definition. For example, Dario was working in a programme created to facilitate access to university for low income students. He also expected to work in a pre-university in the future. Franco worked on setting exams in primary schools. There he realised the differences between children from low and middle class schools. Camilo worked in academic reinforcement in a public school where he could apply some of the teaching techniques that he learnt from one of his admired teachers.

According to participants the location of schools where they have their teaching placements also impacts on training and future expectations. This also created contradictions when they talk about their future role as teachers. Muriel, for example, stated that she saw inconsistencies between what was the actual reality of teaching at school and what she learned in the university. In schools children received a very instructional, rigid and homogeneous sort of teaching whereas university has had a learner-centred approach:

In early childhood education it is hard [to be motivated] there is a lot to change [...] you come to the centre unmotivated because I had worked in eight centres and no one made me to tell, oh!, that's a good strategy! I will use it! Oh! Look how much the children learn, oh! Look how they include community, I am very unmotivated with placements and here in the university they say this is good, that is good, ok! But how we can do that? (Muriel)

In summary, the participants' narratives show how the Chilean educational transitions tend to be more challenging than in New Zealand. This is expressed in several experiences of devaluation of their interests, decisions and options along the way. As discussed in Chapter Two, some studies state that educational systems that split students

into structured learning routes from an early stage tend to conduct students to similar occupations than their parents (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2006). On the contrary, educational systems that have a common curriculum for all students, give the same value to different learning areas and establish flexible learning routes through which students can progress according to their individual interests and abilities, tend to widen students' opportunities in the educational field (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2006). Chile and New Zealand represent specific examples of both options and the outcomes of this study showed that for these participants and in their particular national context, the New Zealand pattern is more supportive and smoother than the Chilean one.

The elements that appear more effective in the New Zealand System are: a strong alignment between secondary school and university qualifications and assessments; the flexible options students have in both institutions (particularly at school) to choose subjects according to their interests; the similar prestige that students perceive between different learning areas throughout the transition in comparison to Chile; the importance of practical learning experiences in school and university; and, a more consolidated and smooth financial aid system. Thanks to these characteristics, the New Zealand transitional system was more effective than the Chilean one in recognising and supporting the diverse and irregular transitions through which participants in this study progressed.

At the same time, in both countries, participants applied their agency to compensate for the ineffectiveness of the educational system to prepare them well for university. In the case of Chile, some of these participants used various public or university programmes that attempt to compensate for the weaknesses of secondary school educational preparation. In other cases, work or community-based experiences in Chile and work experiences in New Zealand gave participants the time to discover new skills and to re-define their expectations.

Therefore, these experiences of transitions confirm Bourdieu's (1973) idea, stated at the beginning of this chapter, about the influence of family cultural capital as a starting point of the trajectories. As Bourdieu and the reproductive theories state, in both countries

educational systems tend to reproduce social inequalities through actions that make it difficult for this group of students to achieve, take decisions or choose subjects according to their real interests. However, the system also offers them the chance to widen their opportunities and increase their educational expectations along the way. Thus, these educational experiences take place in a complex tension between reproductive forces and forces pushing towards increasing levels of equity. Participants use different strategies to increase their advantage in this context. They not only used institutional resources for their educational progression, but also different forms of social and cultural capital to widen their opportunities in a restricted educational structure. They manage their own timing during their transition, they focus on specific learning experiences institutional and non-institutional and they select the sort of relationships they want to have in their future working life.

In the following chapter I will deepen the description of the characteristics of students and the ways they have invested in these forms of cultural and social capital. The analysis will focus on the symbolic connections that students establish between the educational institutions and their social and cultural fields and how these connections help them in their educational progression.

CHAPTER 7:

CHRONOTOPES OF SCHOOL

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I referred to theories of reproduction in education that frame the school system as an instrument that has historically reproduced social structure. According to such theorists (Baudelot & Establet, 1974; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1964; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), school and university assume the authority to demarcate the boundary between what is considered to be legitimate and illegitimate forms of knowledge. Educational institutions not only impose this “arbitrary power” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 13) but also create the symbolic conditions to legitimate this authority through their pedagogical actions and discourses. Through the incorporation of habitus, this pedagogical power and the mechanisms of legitimation eventually come to be embodied in student behaviour.

This chapter extends these ideas through exploring the chronotopes that the students constructed as they narrated their learning experiences at school. In this section, I identify the similarities and convergences between these chronotopes in each country. As discussed in Chapter Five, the chronotopes throw light on the position that students took as they developed their narratives within the specific field of dialogue that took place during the interviews. I understand position in this case from the perspective of Hays and Larrain (2011) who draw on Voloshinov (1973) and Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986a) notion of utterance. According to these authors the utterance is both an “active response” to other utterances (Bakhtin, 1981 as cited in Hays & Larrain, 2011, p. 49) and “a position taken movement” (p. 49). Position in this case is not understood as a fixed location but an “effort towards holding a position” (p. 4) towards other utterances. This effort led participants to use certain types of discourses over others all along their narrative, which this study attempts to identify.

The first section of this chapter identifies the predominant position that the participants take towards institutional discourses. My hypothesis is that this predominant position reveals the habitus that participants acquired during their school years. As discussed in

Chapter Four, this habitus does not necessarily reflect a perfect homology between students' behaviour and institutional structures. Participants showed different levels of incorporation of institutional discourses. What is significant in the case of this analysis is that this habitus is shaped by dispositions that were learnt during school times and later, which shaped how students engaged with the university environment. The second section explores how students formed different positions towards institutional discourses and practices throughout their schooling. I distinguish two main positions: distance and belonging to the institutional structure.

Predominant position and habitus

In the methodology chapter, I described the different instruments that were used in the research to capture the different perspectives that participants had of their learning experiences. These included the interview, the storyboard and the group interview. Two of these approaches in particular provided rich data about the participants' positioning. The first method was the interview context itself and the way it provided narrative data about the participants' dispositions towards the study. The second method was the storyboard, particularly with regard to the title and credits that participants created. As discussed in Chapter Five, the storyboard title defines the main addressee to which the utterance is oriented. The credits in turn, define the social sphere from which the utterance is created.

In Chile, participants were active and enthusiastic when constructing their storyboards. Of the twelve participants, eleven went to his or her former school to take pictures. All of them came to the second interview with pictures of their university. Two of them added additional work to the storyboard, building one storyboard for each period of their education or preparing a text document describing the content of the pictures. Three participants movingly thanked me for the opportunity to participate. Several of them also saved the storyboard to take it home afterwards.

This engagement was connected to an utterance that tends to speak from a "social voice". They demonstrated behaviours that suggested that they were speaking with others. During the image recording process and the interviews, some participants were

accompanied by friends. During the interview, the “guests” waited patiently until their friends finished and sometimes were asked to make suggestions about the storyboard.

The titles also confirmed this collective utterance. They do not use the pronouns “I” and “My” in their titles. Muriel called her storyboard “To Live learning” (“Vivir aprendiendo”), connecting the idea of learning to the full experience of life. Monica also used a collective voice to describe her experience, for example, “We took the wide pathway” (“Vamos por ancho camino”). Franco also exemplified this collective sense of narrative when he said at the end of the interview, “Thank you. This interview can give a live example of a first generation boy, coming from the countryside, to show that it’s possible”.

This engaged and social disposition from the Chilean participants was combined with the use of a type of discourse that distanced them from their institutions. The storyboard’s titles showed an utterance that had no institutional scenarios as the main addressers (see Table 7.1). Only four out of twelve included the words “learning”, “education” and “student”. Moreover, those who did use words drawn from the field of education, combined them with a sense of feeling set apart from their institution. For example, Alejandra titled her story board “One reviewing of my student life through an analogy” (“Una revision de mi vida de estudiante a partir de una analogia”). Despite talking about “student life”, what she underlined was the act of reviewing using an analogy (she said the storyboard was the analogy). The analogy is presented as a third voice that participated in the creation of the storyboard. Dario gave his storyboard the title “Transition from school to university”, a very descriptive and formal title. However, the subtitle that followed located him outside the institutional discourse and in a collective voice, “Stages that define the life of a man” (“Etapas que definen la vida de un hombre”).

At the same time, the titles were directed to the external changes that had influenced or guided their lives during and since the transition to university had taken place. Most of the titles were focused on the experience of transition as a time of change and in this respect, the participants frequently used terms that are associated with ideas about ‘progression’. For example, some used words or phrases in the titles of their storyboards

such as, “changes”, “a new experience, a big change”, “change, everything change”, “walking on the wide pathway”, “Pathway”. These titles show the influence of external changes that were beyond the participants’ control, and which suggest that the impact of enrolling at university was profound.

The credits used by Chilean participants’ also revealed a series of ‘voices’ in which institutional characters are displaced by other people as the main referents. For example, there were few references to actual teachers and only two participants referred to teachers by their names (Marcela and Franco). The presence of people from non-institutional sites was predominant. One only included friends and people from their organisation. One gave a general thanks to “the people I met, the people I am meeting and the people I will meet” (Pablo), and another one did not want to state credits at all (Rodrigo). Consistent with the experience of double transitions; work bosses, pre-universities, community organisations and suburbs are also mentioned, all of these significant people, groups and places sit outside school and university.

In contrast, the interviews in New Zealand revealed that the participants’ perspectives about their educational transitions were focused on both the personal and the institutional elements of their experience. Throughout the research process, the New Zealand participants were engaged during the research process but most of them were in fact less proactive in taking pictures and bringing them to the interviews than the Chilean participants. Amongst those who were living in the same town as their former school, five out of eight participants returned to their former schools to take photographs. Others preferred to bring pictures from Facebook or from the internet. In the second interview with the New Zealand students, where university experiences were discussed, seven out of twelve brought pictures of the university (although two sent pictures with comments afterwards), saying that they did not have time or had forgotten to take pictures about that period of their educational lives.

The motivation to be involved with this study differed from the Chilean participants. The New Zealand students tended to balance the reflective value that the research offered them to reflect on their learning with other issues that motivated them to participate, such

us supporting the researcher, thinking about the nature of teaching in general, having the opportunity to be part of a research project before leaving their teaching programme or being interested in the comparative perspective with Chile. The word they mostly used to describe the experience was “interesting”. One female participant (Amelia) thanked me after finishing the process stating that it was “the most reflective experience” she had ever had. Hine saved the storyboard to take home.

At the same time, New Zealand referred to educational transitions in terms of a more individualised progression (rather than the more collective framing of the Chilean participants) with formal learning setting. In their storyboard titles, they tended to use an institutionalised discourse. Six of the New Zealand participants used words that directed attention to the formal learning aspects of their transitions, such as “learning” or “education”. Five participants situated their transitions in terms of an individualised personal experience, they titled it “My clumsy education”, “My educational evolution”, “My journey through education”, “My most significant learning experiences”, “Finding my way” or “How I learn”, conceiving their educational experience as a personal journey mainly expressed through an educational formal type of discourse. Evie, who studied to be an early childhood teacher, titled her storyboard “Jack in a box” referring to an early childhood game which express simultaneously her feelings about school and her identification to his institutional career (see Table 7.1).

There were two instances in the New Zealand storyboard data where participants used a metaphorical utterance and referred to a collective or transcendent voice in talking about their images: “A journey through a strange terrain but with a happy ending” (using a graffiti aesthetic that she said reflected her low income suburb culture) and “I te timatanga ki a ariki (In the beginning was God)” used by a Christian participant of Māori descent.

In the Chilean research sites, the notion of change was heavily emphasised by participants in discussing transition experiences, while in New Zealand one recurring idea was the notion of transition as a journey. For example, several storyboard had titles such as, “My journey through high school”, “My journey through education”, “a journey of learning’. The idea of transition as a journey suggests that these participants may have felt they had a greater level of control over their own learning experience than

those in the Chilean cohort who focussed on the idea of “change”, suggesting the impact of external forces beyond their personal control.

Table 7.1: Storyboard Titles

New Zealand participants	
Name	Storyboard title
Grace	I Te Tiimatanga Kia Ariki
Alan	Finding my way
Mabel	My clumsy education
Ruby	A journey through a strange terrain with a happy ending
Sophie	How I learn
Amelia	My educational evolution
Adrian	My most significant learning experiences
Jessica	Journey through high school to university
Hine	My journey through education
Lily	A journey of learning
Evie	Jack in a box
Chloe	(No title)
Chilean participants	
Name	Storyboard title
Dario	Transition from school to university. Stages in a man’s life
Camilo	Wanting to stand out
Julieta	Pathway to my university
Jorge	A shouting silence
Marcela	Changes
Franco	From being worker-students to student-worker
Rodrigo	Pathways
Monica	Walking the wide pathway
Muriel	To live learning
Alejandra	A review of my student life through an analogy
Carol	A new experience, a big change
Pablo	Cycles

The credits also showed that these New Zealand participants’ utterances were mainly directed towards people in the institution, their families and themselves. The personal focus was expressed in three cases who stated their own names in the credits, two of them without including other people. Peers were not mentioned as much as family. People from informal settings were only mentioned by one of them (one radio speaker) while one mentioned God and one mentioned unknown people who “allowed me to observe”. The New Zealand participants were more likely to acknowledge school and university as a dominant feature in their transition experience and they represented this

through naming actual people and places. In the New Zealand context, the school teacher's role is particularly appreciated. Thus, eight New Zealand participants (Sophie, Chloe, Alan, Adrian, Hine, Grace, Lily and Mabel) mentioned school teachers and three (Amelia, Grace and Sophie) mentioned university lecturers who had a significant impact on their lives. Apart from teachers, other significant people were named as the career advisor (Amelia), the dean (Hine) and the student learning support advisors (Sophie) in the university were also mentioned. One student also mentioned the importance of particular institutional facilities, such as the gym, in her university (Amelia).

In summary, students in New Zealand and Chile expressed very different perspectives that signalled the presence of different habituses in the respective fields of education. In Chile, participants expressed a sense of belonging with a clear collective and social voice. These participants saw their experience as a reflection of a larger collective experience that transcended them as individuals. At the same time, the presence or influence of educational institutions was over-shadowed by other forms of social belonging, such as that found in the company of peers or family members. In New Zealand, on the other hand, participation in the research was predominantly interpreted as a personal transaction and framed as an individual experience. The consistently individualised aspects of engagement over-shadowed other kinds of cultural or social belonging amongst the New Zealand participants. However, the presence of institutions and social networks within school was strong, much more so than in the Chilean context.

This section has described the predominant position and habitus that students revealed during the interview. However, participants' narratives showed complex movements of resistance and incorporation of the academic habitus that are expressed in multiple positioning towards institutions. The next section analyses the participants' chronotopes, distinguishing between the moments when they experienced either a sense of distance or a sense of belonging with regard to the institutional contexts of school.

Chronotopes of school in Chile

Chronotopes of distance

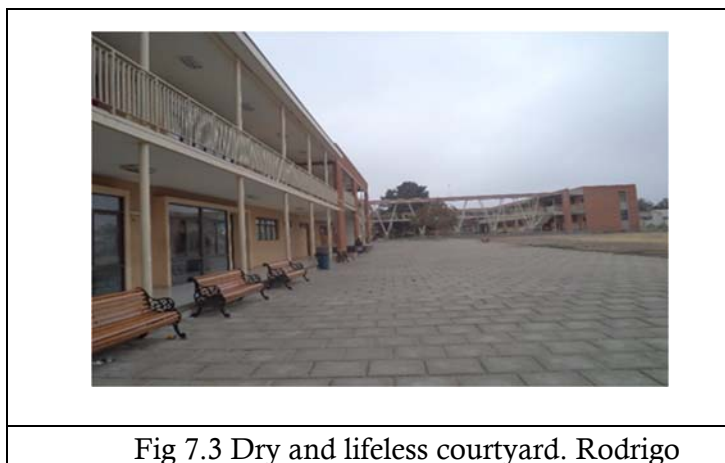
Due to the social and educational segregation in Chile within a highly differentiated schooling system, Chilean participants tended to describe their school experiences as one of uprooting. Indeed, the culture of school produced a degree of alienation from the participants' own culture. Participants who chose to attend private voucher schools saw this as an opportunity to gain access to a social and educational environment slightly better than their place of origin. However, market-driven educational practices and the financial pressure that participants' families were under, increased their sense of belonging to a socially exploited group. Those participants who were selected for a prestigious state school had to make a long daily journey out of their home suburb and into the central city where they would meet mostly people from low or low middle class suburbs, most of them not from their own school area. These participants found that they had to leave their former primary school friends behind in lower quality educational institutions. Finally, if they accessed a state school, in many cases, the poor quality of facilities and teaching conditions tended to reinforce people's sense of social exclusion and alienation.

The experience of uprooting was clearly expressed by the Chilean participants in the way they represented their schooling spaces. The first element that impressed me as observer was the pervasive influence of a normative and highly controlled environment. Their images show a daily life at school in which discipline is turned into vigilance and physical restriction, limiting the opportunities for participants to unfold their potential as learners. This security and surveillance-oriented environment is reflected through images of high fences and jail-like buildings (See Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3) as well as through stories about how the teachers in charge of outdoor school spaces patrolled the areas where the students were clustered. Several participants produced images that depicted their school space as a sort of "jail" where students were treated as "prisoners", as Jorge and Rodrigo showed (Fig 7.1 and 7.2):

This is one evidence of the high security of the school...[these fences were] a response to the high number of students who wanted to 'escape', who were punished with detentions, told off and the installation of more 'cages'. (Jorge) (Fig. 7.2)

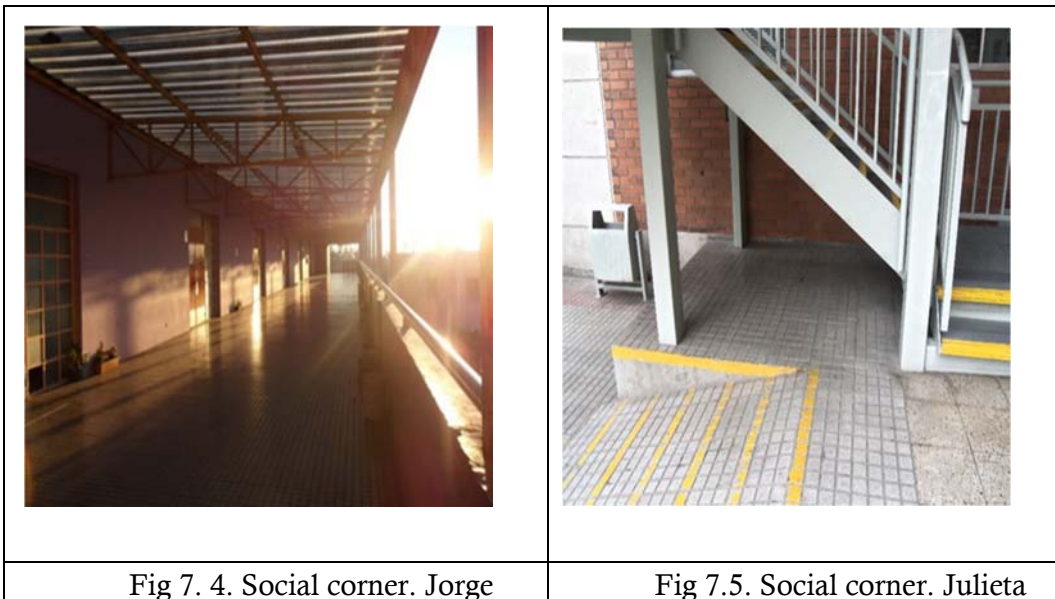


All of us used to say, oh! We look like prisoners! Having all this space on the other side, and nothing was green, everything was so withered and yellow, I think it's because their [school teachers and personnel] mentality is like this, dark colours, very lifeless colours, not any green fields, nothing! (Rodrigo)



However, the images of school spaces also show the different ways that the participants had to either avoid or confront institutional control and surveillance. Corners, stairs, corridor or wall paintings were places to meet other students and symbolically represented the resistance to teachers' control (Fig 7.4 and 7.5).

The corridor in the third floor... it was a place for talking and often it was a place to express our dissatisfaction with the bad quality of the [academic] subjects and the abusive treatment from teachers and supervisors. (Jorge) (Fig 7.4)



A further aspect of school space, particularly in private voucher schools, was the influence of the market on education. This is an especially controversial issue in Chile where market forces are increasingly embedded in educational practices, policy and places. These debates are clearly represented in some of the pictures taken from the Chilean field sites and market intervention in education was intensely criticised by most of the participants. Their images show advertisements outside the school or in the financial administration offices of the school, and were intended as a ways of representing profit-driven educational interests. These business interests are also visible in the way that staff members engage with students and their families by reinforcing the perception of students as pure customers, as Rodrigo described:

This is the administrative building, the Principal's office. It's where the enrolment fees are paid. There is too much interest in business [and] making money. (Rodrigo)

This market influence is also seen in images of dilapidated institutional facilities which expose the irony of school authorities that emphasize business but does not invest in children. These aspects of the educational experience increased participants' experience of alienation at school. Those who come from public schools, used pictures of these sometimes ramshackle facilities to symbolise the declining quality of public schools and the loss of important childhood spaces. Marcela summed up this sense well when she described their group attempts to recover some of the spaces at her old school that had been important to her:

This is the old childcare garden. We tried to recover it, to plant something, to make it look beautiful, but it didn't work, now it is completely empty. (Marcela) (Fig 7.6)



Fig 7.6 Old abandoned garden. Marcela

Specialisation areas in technical schools like the computer room were critical spaces where some Chilean participants realised the inconsistency between the discourse of school and the reality of the kinds of future opportunities they offered. Students used their images to show obsolete equipment and the scarcity of crucial educational resources, as shown in the following pictures by Marcela and Franco (Fig 7.7 and 7.8):

	
<p>Fig 7.7. Careless classroom. Marcela</p>	<p>Fig 7.8. Poorly equipped kitchen. Franco</p>

In prestigious state schools, although the influence of the market was not quite so visible, there was a discourse of opposition against rigid, authoritarian discourse and the nationalism that were evident in school symbols and rituals. Thus, the institutional geography of these places (for example, the architecture, the courtyards, etc.) reinforced the feeling of being in a place that was not consistent with the participants' values and identity. Alejandra, who studied in a prestigious state school, described her feelings about that:

I hated all this nationalist stuff at school, singing the national anthem and all that stuff, I hated it. I think it's pathetic even now. (Alejandra)

From this perspective, the pictures show that the participants did not conceive of institutional geographies simply as places where they either transitioned or studied, they also reflect a strong sense of the participants' awareness of being socially excluded and marginalised.

In most cases in the Chilean field sites, it was school authorities, particularly principals, who represented the stringent control and profit interest.

The principal never smiled, he was a very dark guy. The only time I saw him smiling was when the president came, that's why I include this picture, I disliked him, I didn't like that part of the school. (Rodrigo)

Along similar lines, several Chilean students were critical that in educational institutions, teaching was not always the first focus of their teachers. They believed that the school culture promoted heavy-handed discipline, market-driven priorities or a jingoistic nationalism above teaching and learning.

In Chile, teachers were also often represented as examples of the disengagement that the school experience produced. The participants referred to being subject to boring or authoritarian teaching methodologies. Sometimes, teachers are not blamed for this, but the educational system as a whole is identified as the problem. Working conditions in state schools are worse than in the private sector which decreased teacher motivation. Marcela described older, senior teachers as the clearest example of this:

They have been teaching there so much time and they are tired, when I was there I thought teachers were bad but may be teachers weren't so bad, the environment makes them bad. (Marcela)

In technical schools and scientific-humanistic schools, the main criticisms students had about teachers related to teaching techniques that stifled enquiry, curiosity and debate so that it was difficult to express different perspectives or opinions. They described teachers whose performance in the classroom was formulaic and mechanical: teachers who spoke in monologues in the classroom or used authoritarian discourses; and, teachers who acted unfairly, making arbitrary distinctions amongst the students.

In every school, students confronted a certain level of struggle or tension with the dominant school discourses. Control, market forces and other aspects of school culture reinforced their sense of alienation and lack of a sense of place. Most of them did not feel that the system supported them or their aspirations, although certain aspects of school and some teachers did play an important role in supporting some of them along the way.

In summary, school confronted the Chilean participants with an educational experience in which poverty, exclusion and the force of the market were constantly reflected back at them. This was also seen in the kinds of teaching approaches, in which the academic focus was lost and much of the teaching methodologies lacked innovation and as such they were perceived as boring or irrelevant. The inadequate express material conditions were reflected in a single teaching discourse which tended towards an authoritarian form of monoglossia. There were, however, differences according to the types of schools the participants had attended. The heaviest criticism of the educational experience came from those participants who had attended technical privately-voucher schools. Participants from other kinds of schools had more nuanced views. In the following sections of this chapter, I review the places and discourses that connect students with a more heteroglossic educational environment, in which other kinds of learning relations are possible. These are also discourses that represented other approaches to learning which played an important role in the participants' motivation to pursue further studies.

Chronotopes of belonging

Extensive social and educational segregation within Chile means that Chilean students tend to mix mainly with those from the same or similar social background. Most of the participants had attended secondary school in their home zones which were located within a highly socially segregated city. Some students (Alejandra, Rodrigo and Franco) came from the semi-rural areas that surround Santiago, the capital city. People who live in their suburbs or towns shared similar origins, and schools intensified this high degree of segregation. Those participants who attended prestigious state schools had access to greater social diversity but even so, most of the students who attended these schools were low or middle low income students. This context reinforced a habitus which prioritised a sense of belonging with the student body as a collective and as a consequence, students were more resistant to individual distinctions and competition amongst peers. This was certainly a contrast with New Zealand participants who had a more individualised focus.

When answering the question; how did you achieve at school? Several Chilean participants went back in their biography to their early years in primary school. They remembered that their achievements there enabled them to gain recognition from teachers. However, being distinguished from their classmates set them apart from their peers and, in some cases, even set them apart from family members. As a result, they learnt early on not to show off their achievements in front of others and this became a strategy for social integration for several participants. The participants recalled that differentiating themselves from the group tended to carry some sort of social punishment. Julieta described how she experienced this:

I did not used to approach teacher directly, I tried to avoid them...I got high marks, but I had some troubles. When I was younger, the teachers placed me high up in my class and my classmates didn't like that, so since then I've tried to go unnoticed.

(Julieta)

At the same time, other students were the first point of reference when it came to creating a sense of belonging. The participants' chronotopes were full of images where they showed a collective form of use of schools spaces. Several of them emphasised that particular classrooms were an important part of their storyboard. In Chilean schools, students use the same classroom for all subjects. As a consequence, participants tended not to connect the classroom with a particular school subject, rather they linked it to the community of a particular class group. To this extent, the image of the classroom was closely related with participants' relationships with their peers and the sense of belonging that emerged for them through their friendships and shared social activities. Pablo showed a picture of the wall of his classroom where all his classmates names were glued in colourful circles (See Fig 7.9): 2E is the number of the class group and "administration" is the learning area.

This picture represents the sense of group, always being one, to be all integrated.

(Rodrigo)

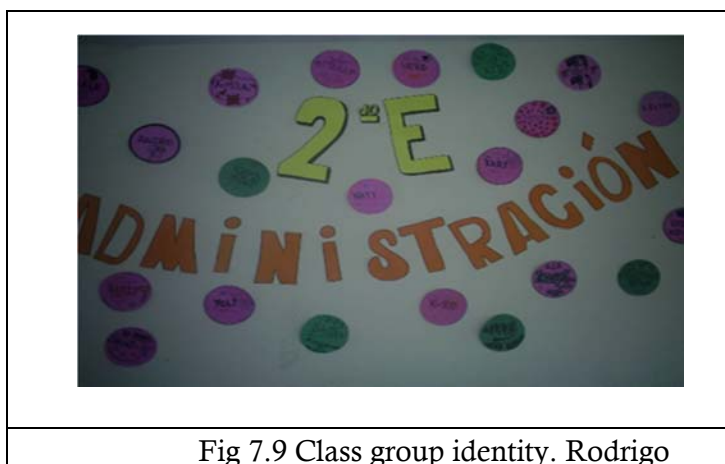


Fig 7.9 Class group identity. Rodrigo

However, the representation of peers goes beyond immediate social networks. As described earlier, many of the participants characterized school as a hostile environment (Dario, Jorge, Marcela, Monica, Muriel, Alejandra, Carol and Camilo) or as a place where they received little institutional acknowledgement or support (Jorge, Marcela, Monica, Muriel, Carol and Pablo). In these cases, friends were a central support system through which they raised their aspirations and discussed future vocations. Engaging with other students allowed the participants to identify their own skills and improve their self-confidence. For this reason, friends appear as significant presences in the participants' learning, as Marcela stated:

I always taught my classmates, I was so arrogant, because I would always skip classes and even then, I told them come home to study and one girl told me, you know, Marce, I've never got a blue mark in an exam. My Mum hired private tutors but I can't do it, I can't do it. I remember I taught her for one hour and I told her, I swear if you got a blue I will study teaching and she got a blue! (Marcela)

In other instances, friends open up new ways of understanding Chilean society. They also represented the place from which a new sense of belonging emerged, which provided them with an alternative learning experience, different from that at school. For example, Monica said:

I got a new lease of life when I met my boyfriend, he was a Punk. Punk music helped me to find a new meaning about what was happening around me [...] to understand

that we were in a system, that society was ruled by an ideology [...] then I started to see a root. (Monica)

Encounters with students from different social backgrounds were valued by most participants. During the group interview, some of them considered that coming from a marginalised zone had provided them with social skills that others did not have. In this respect, the participants presented these kinds of experiences as a confirmation of their marginalised social status and a sense of solidarity and belonging within those groups. Students from more marginal backgrounds valued these encounters as an opportunity for personal development, where they learnt to be street wise, as Muriel stated:

My classmates who have money, who live in other zones, they don't know what a marginal suburb is, they don't know how to manage it, I know when someone will pick a pocket in the subway, in the bus, so I teach them that stuff. (Muriel, group interview)

It was the opposite case for those who came from the most economically deprived zones. Meeting other students from families with slightly higher levels of cultural capital tended to reinforce the low levels of cultural capital within their families. As Muriel stated, in her encounters with social “others” from more privileged backgrounds, she was able to gain experience that school and home did not provide.

I did not know that the university entrance test existed; I barely knew that universities existed. In Year Twelve, my friends opened my eyes. To meet people from other social backgrounds helped me to know that. (Muriel)

Those who valued their schools tended to some extent to perceive that school was an extension of their social or family values. The ones that had a positive appreciation of schools (Franco, Dario and Julieta) valued school from the point of view of the value formation more than for the academic approach. For example, Dario valued his prestigious state school for its “social values” expressed in being a set of the educational movement and for promoting a wider social integration between diverse students than other schools. Franco, who came from a state rural school, valued his school for the support he found from teachers and their considerations to their rural origins, and

Julieta, coming from a Christian family, valued her prestigious state school for promoting respect among girls.

However, some participants incorporated new ways of thinking. For example, Alejandra was generally highly critical of her school, however, she valued the competitiveness that the school promoted because she felt that this had helped her to be more prepared for university study. In another case, Pablo, who attended a private voucher school, valued the high expectations his school placed on students and how it had pushed them to do more. These high and competitive expectations stood in opposition to the predominantly conformist and passive culture of his small hometown, as Pablo explained:

I think I agreed [with the school approach] because what they wanted was ok, it wasn't a bad thing. The process was not as beautiful as I would have liked, but I thought it was what we needed...someone who wanted us to achieve, to achieve in some way, to put that in our mind. The principal when we were all lined up he would make us shout, "I am the best!" [Original in English] I wouldn't do it but all children would do it. (Pablo)

In general, teachers were not spontaneously represented by the participants as being particularly significant figures in their lives. I had to ask about them. The participants tended to value those teachers who were different from the rest and who were willing to disrupt or oppose some of the more authoritarian school processes. These were teachers who challenged them intellectually and showed them new perspectives about educational issues. They were valued for their charisma and values. As Camilo commented, in some cases, this included teachers getting involved in student activism:

She [teacher] showed me a very critical and analytical way of teaching. She changed everything that I thought I knew about history but ultimately, she was fired because she opened our eyes. [...] She showed us the world the way we needed to see it, she also supported us in demonstrations [i.e. student protests]. (Camilo)

In other cases, the participants valued teachers who helped them in raising their aspirations for the future, and who were characters that they wanted to imitate in terms of their educational pathway. Valued teachers were commonly described as being approachable people, mainly younger and sometimes seen more as peers than as authorities, as Alejandra describes:

The history teacher...she would love me a lot. There was a strange friendship [...] she used to say - but what is wrong with your Dad!? - All the relationships I have built with teachers have been like that, I show myself as I really am. I don't have hierarchical relationships. (Alejandra)

In summary, the sense of uprooting that Chilean schools embodied for participants and the social homogeneity of the student body reinforced bonds with peers as key supporters in their educational journey at school. These peer networks also strengthened a habitus in which individual distinction and competition tended to be placed behind collective endeavours and commitments. Thus, teachers were valued mainly when they offered guidance from a position that located them within a community of equals, thus differentiating them from the institution in the process.

Chronotopes of school in New Zealand

Chronotopes of distance

Except in four cases, the New Zealand students were very positive about school as an institution. Several of them (Alan, Sophie, Reuben and Grace) had no criticisms of school at all. The others, however, expressed varying degrees of disengagement with their studies or academic work.

As argued earlier, the Chilean participants tended to describe school as a normative institution, with strong school cultures focussed on religion, nationalism or market, imperatives that students felt were imposed on them. In New Zealand, on the other hand, issues of strict or authoritarian teachers or over-zealous disciplinary control and monitoring were not identified as a problem for the students; indeed, only one participant (Jessica) talked about experiencing strict discipline at secondary school. Aspects of school

culture, such as religion or other cultural values were not noted as being influential issues in the daily life of New Zealand schools. Three participants had attended religious schools but they said that they did not see the religious ceremonies and norms as being particularly relevant to their own world views and they felt entirely confident about engaging with people with different religious beliefs. In state schools, institutional ceremonies such as school assemblies were noted by the participants but not in a critical way, more as an example of school ritual. The celebrations of diverse cultures were highly valued by the New Zealand students.

The absence of a strong normative discourse is consistent with a chronotope that positions them as being more accepting of institutional discourses and this was markedly different from the way that the Chilean participants positioned themselves. The resistance that New Zealand students expressed was mainly directed towards certain pedagogical approaches that they found too instructive or irrelevant. In contrast to the cohort in Chile, when the New Zealand students did express a sense of distance from school, they were more concerned about the feeling of being marginalised as a result of the school's internal order and structures rather than seeing schooling as reflecting a much broader social conflict.

Some of the New Zealand participants expressed a sense of distance towards school environments where narrowly-focussed teaching approaches were used that excluded different forms of social expression or different learning styles. Three participants (Amelia, Evie and Mabel), described having difficulties in their involvement in the school environment. In these instances, they established a sense of distance from the predominant way of teaching and the predominant "student culture" both of which reified staff members and peers who were associated with wealthier social groups. The participants positioned themselves within interplay of personal resistance and social exclusion. Mabel notes:

Mabel: I thought everyone was very normal so I thought I should be different so I decided to be different.

Researcher: Could you be different?

Mabel: Yeah (smiling)...Everyone thought I was a freak! I was just a ghost in high school and everyone [was] kind of making fun of me.

This was an individual kind of distance more than a sense of collective peer-driven distancing. These participants generally tended not to find peers who supported them in being “different” from the dominant norm. Sometimes this isolation persisted throughout their schooling and left them feeling like outsiders within the dominant culture of the school. Evie showed a picture that represents her lack of a sense of place during secondary school:

This is a doll that represents the sense of being trapped. No way of getting out [...] I was bullied, I hated school. I was different and they tried to fit me in a box. I don't fit in a box [...] because at school you go far if you are musical, sporty, academic or popular. I was none of them. If you are none of them you get nowhere. (Evie) (Fig 7.10)

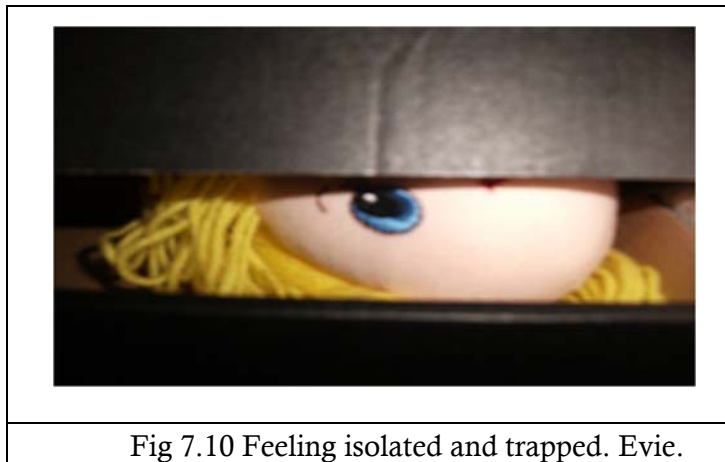


Fig 7.10 Feeling isolated and trapped. Evie.

When comparing the two secondary schools she attended, Amelia placed high value on the first school she went to which had a warmer and more friendly environment and level of social diversity than one she enrolled at later on. At the second school, she experienced bullying and isolation.

Yes, I enjoyed a lower decile school. Because they accepted the cultures in [X] college they made you feel welcomed, they accepted your differences. (Amelia)

To some extent, these participants incorporated powerful memories of exclusion at school into their sense of who they are in the present. For example, during the interview, Evie and Mabel structured their narratives in terms of sheer opposition to school and what it represented. In Evie's case, she blamed the school for being "private, catholic and single sex", however, she did not feel a strong sense of connection to the state school in her area either. She described the local state school as a "druggy school". During the interview she said that she was not very academic, that she was not a studious type of person and she said that what school had asked of her "was not me". Something similar happened with Mabel, who described herself at school as a "Ghost", unmotivated by most of the academic demands that were made on her and only interested in "hanging out with friends and taking drugs".

However, as the interview progressed, Evie and Mabel started to redefine their positions and from there, they identified the places where they had experienced motivating learning environments that had influenced the way they thought about themselves and their studies.

Evie, Mabel and Amelia criticised the restricted teaching approach they had experienced at school. On the other hand, Amelia thought that her teachers were approachable enough but were not able to command respect among students. Evie, in the context of a single sex school, criticised her former teachers for not being able to understand what she said was her "male" way of thinking and adapt their teaching accordingly. Mabel in turn criticised the NCEA approach at school for failing to promote creativity amongst the students:

I think a lot of the arts teachers always wanted to do something specific and I thought that if it's arts you should try a lot of things, to be able to express yourself and I tried to do that and they would tell me I am wrong. (Mabel)

Accordingly, Mabel searched for ideas and beliefs outside of school to challenge the conservative values in her family and the restricted teaching approach at school. Through listening to radio programmes, she reinforced her political critical thinking and by reading widely she formulated a personal aesthetic based on Ghosts and Gore characters through which she differentiated herself from her peers.

Other students, who did not suffer isolation, also were critical of the teaching methods they experienced as secondary school students. Hine, valued the support she was given at school to achieve university entrance qualifications but she was critical of the predominant learning approach which she considered “boring” especially after NCEA had been implemented in Year Eleven:

In the earlier years, school teachers had the freedom to choose their topics, the research projects, like Egypt and thinks like that, they were fun and interesting [...], but when you start with NCEA [school] becomes more structured because you just teach for the test, so it's all about passing the exam at the end of the year, so it's boring. (Hine)

Thus, while Hine enjoyed some subjects at school, she did not represent herself as being strongly motivated about school in general. She positioned herself in other learning settings within her family's rural environment which she also highly valued as being influential in her personal development:

This fruit is from our trees. We were really proud of our fruit, and it was a huge learning thing for me as well because he [her Dad] always taught us that we had to work, work for what you want, putting an effort in if you want results. (Hine) (Fig. 7.11)

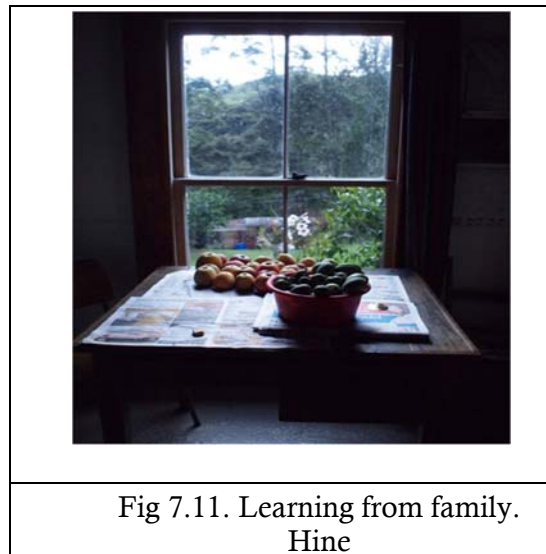


Fig 7.11. Learning from family.
Hine

The New Zealand certification system was also criticised by some participants because they felt that it does not recognise different learning styles. Amelia said that her learning approach did not fit with the demands of external exams and she always preferred to obtain credit through internal examinations. However, she considered that school only valued those students who achieved well in external exams and, as a consequence, she was placed in the low ability stream despite her belief that she had the ability and skills to achieve well.

Ruby and Lily, who both came from low decile schools, were the most critical of the pedagogic support they received at school. On their storyboards and in their narratives they criticised the organisation and structure of teaching at their respective schools, which they argued, had negatively affected their level of preparation for university.

We went through six teachers in one year, which was crazy, one couldn't handle our class, so we moved to another teacher, he was a dick. He was mean and grumpy.

(Ruby)

Lily described her low decile school as lacking an academic focus. However, her focus was not on norms and rules as was the case with the Chilean participants, but on the time given to extra-curricular and social activities:

My school always found things to do out of school work just to have fun. I had got to go to school adventure which is five days on a sailing ship, [...] you got all these different things you can go on. You would come back and wouldn't be behind at all because they haven't done anything in two weeks. (Lily)

In summary, New Zealand participants situate their narrative within the educational institution. They described themselves trying to incorporate an academic habitus strongly associated to wealthier students groups. However, some of them failed or progressed slowly in this attempt, which made them feel high levels of isolation. Following the same guidelines, their narratives positioned them in opposition and resistance to the institutional structures when teaching approaches were restricted and incapable to develop their potential or consider their singularity as learners.

Chronotopes of belonging

Compared with Chile, in New Zealand there was a stronger identification with the school as an institution, with teachers and other staff members. On the other hand, the relationship between peers is more complex than in Chile due to the social diversity that characterised New Zealand schools. From the participants interviewed, six of them (Alan, Chloe, Sophie, Reuben, Hine, Grace and Jessica) had a clearly positive perception of their school as a place characterised by supportive teachers and a warm and motivating environment. They referred to their school as a place they “loved” (Sophie), or that they found “inspiring” (Reuben). Several of the participants fully identified with their school (Chloe, Alan, Sophie, Reuben and Amy) and others expressed a more strategic connection, in which school played an important role in supporting their future goals (Jessica and Hine).

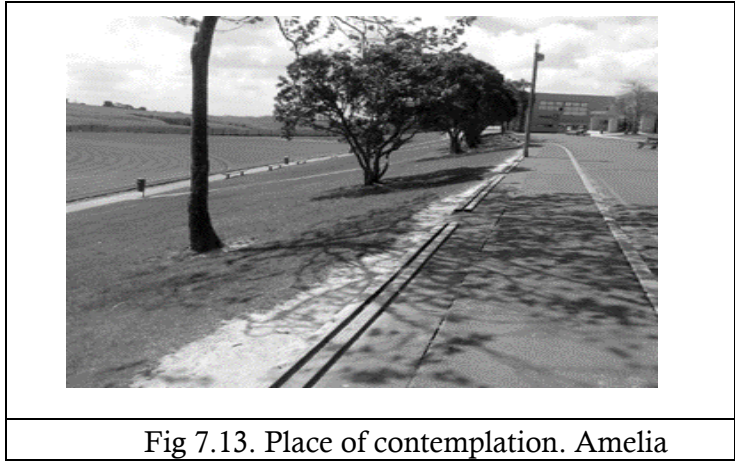
The storyboards from New Zealand participants showed places that participants actively associated with positive emotions such as contemplation, play or creativity. Green, open spaces in the schooling environment (like playing or sports fields) provided them with places which they felt an emotional attachment and sense of identification for. Sophie, Amelia and Mabel provided images of pleasant places in their school grounds where they could rest from academic activities and find spaces either to be alone or to socialize (See Figs 7.12, 7.13 and 7.14):

[Showing the place where she used to meet with her classmates in Year Thirteen]

This one [...] I thought that it's quite pretty. This was one of the things that I really liked; it was so pretty, at lunch time aside academic work. (Sophie) (Fig 7.12)



[Most schools in New Zealand have no boundary walls. Amelia showed a reserve next to school] That's where I used to sit [...] at lunch time and the sun was out, it was interesting looking at all the boys and people playing sport on the field, training [...] rolling up on the ground, put on a hat and all sorts of things, it's quite interesting. (Amelia) (Fig 7.13)



This is one of the [...] things everyone is doing at the same time, painting the bins. (Mabel) (Fig 7.15)

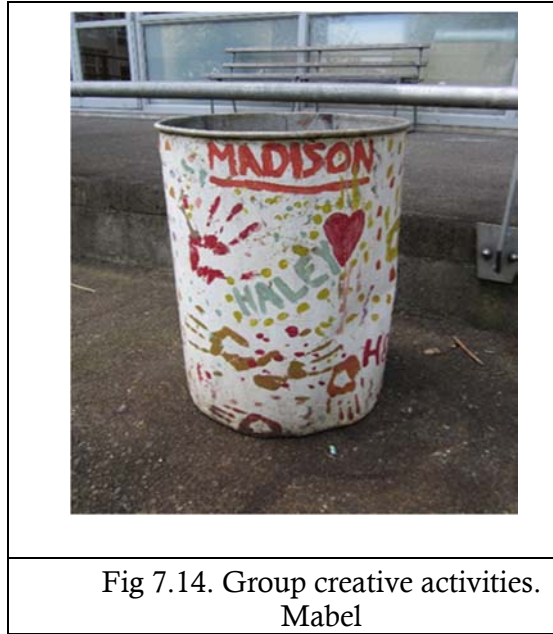


Fig 7.14. Group creative activities.
Mabel

The fact that in New Zealand each school subject is often taught in a particular classroom helped them to connect their learning interests with places at school. They created an emotional attachment to the places where they learnt their favourite subjects. Moreover, the school architecture allowed them to find a variety of places, some of them linked to more practical experiences while others were connected with more academic experiences. Some of these places also offered them the opportunity to focus on more individual activities, where the social pressure of the school environment was suspended. Amelia, for example, found places in her school where she could escape the hostile social environment of the school:

This was a stairway, a very steep stairway down [...] where we did technical drawing and design and the cooking centre. My photography classroom used to be over there. That's also another subject that I loved because I could be in a darkroom, and I felt like nothing matters apart from being in the darkroom the whole lunch time. Just doing things and being creative in my own way, that's what I really enjoyed.

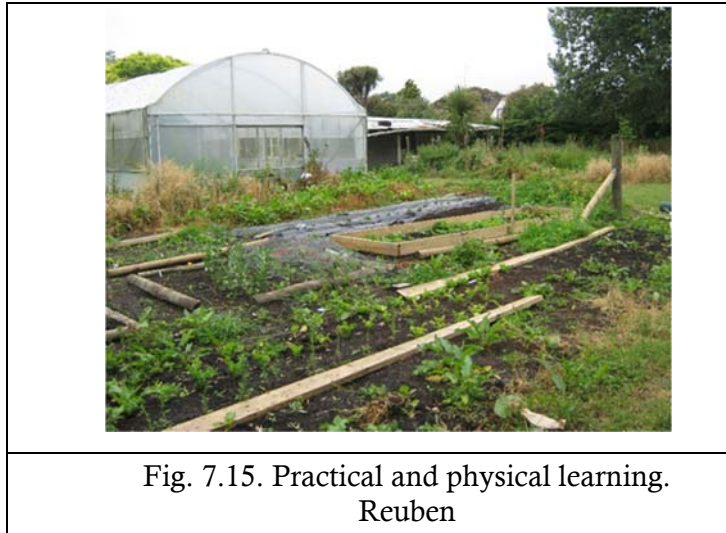
(Amelia)

As discussed in Chapter Six, five participants in New Zealand (Alan, Ruby, Reuben, Evie and Chloe) said that they did not do well in the traditional “academic” settings. However, during high school they found teachers and other staff members who played an

important role in supporting them. They also found places that represented teaching approaches that were more consistent with their own style of learning.

Reuben for example, had a family that did not have very high academic expectations of him. In his low decile state school, he was strongly motivated by his Japanese language teacher. The teacher got him to run some social activities for the younger boys and this gave him his first sense of the possibility of taking up teaching as a vocation. During the interview, he presented an image of the horticulture block at his former school as an example of a place where he could experience a different teaching approach that was more consistent with his identity:

Working in a horticulture block was one of my favourite things, because it was a sort of practical work rather than sitting in a classroom, especially when you are in a classroom for five hours a day... it's a different sort of learning as well, it's not just learning in the class, and it was a part of assessment as well but it was just basically based on your experience rather than sitting. (Reuben) (Fig 7.15)



Other students who described themselves as not very academic, also found alternative places at school where they could approach learning in a different way (for example, practical and experiential) with the support of teachers and peers. Alan, for example, said that during school he focused mainly on his social life, and found through his school sport activities a way of developing his skills that led to his interest in teaching. His

storyboard was comprised of several images of him socializing with his friends and with his form teacher and practising sport.

Ruby and Evie had each enrolled in the Gateway programme, a state programme that supports pathways from secondary to tertiary education through work-based experience. Through these programmes they were able to strengthen their engagement with learning through activities that connected practical and theoretical experiences and which ultimately led them to choose early childhood teaching as a future career, as Evie stated:

I started [Gateway] in the beginning of Year Thirteen which was my last year of school, that introduced me to teaching and my boss [...] she employed me as a staff member and then she really pushed me into early childhood education. Without the Gateway programme as a school experience I wouldn't be here [...] I don't know what I would have done with my life, I would be lost. (Evie)

Participants also commented on the range of approaches used by schools to support them in specific transition milestones. Sophie talked about the support she received:

When I started high school [...] we just followed each other to the different classes so as not to have the stress of meeting different people, every time we had a different subject, so we created, I guess, a bond and we helped each other. You spend half a day to three quarters of a day together with the same class and the teachers worked together as well so all the teachers [...] they all knew the same students. (Sophie)

The last year of secondary school was also a milestone as most schools allowed students to be more autonomous and they are given special privileges that younger students did not have:

In the last year we were [treated as being quite] special. We had this long uniform instead of a short one; we had a building in the school specifically for Year Thirteen [...] without being disrupted by the younger students. Things like that! And we just got given a real sense of belonging and responsibility with the place. (Chloe)

Streaming students according to their academic abilities was widely criticised by most of the participants. Certainly, several of them had been placed in streams when they were at school. This was problematic for those who had been streamed in the low-ability groups, although the participants did not see this as a barrier to achieving university entrance level qualifications. On the other hand, those who had been placed in the middle and higher streams were more likely to view streaming as having been a positive experience for them.

I really didn't want to be associated with people, that sounds really bad!, I didn't want to hang out with people in lower streams, because I knew if I did there would be social influences that would stop me from getting to my goals, but education wise...I just feel sorry for the people who were in the lower streams. (Hine)

In other cases, groups were split according to gender. Some schools considered that separating males and females would help to close the achievement gaps between girls and boys.

The diversity of New Zealand secondary schools in comparison with Chile was also seen in relation to the student body. In this respect, school was described as a site in which the participants encountered students from backgrounds different to their own. Nine participants (Alan, Chloe, Sophie, Amelia, Jessica, Hine, Grace, Evie and Mabel) were enrolled in schools where a higher number of students came from wealthier families, either high decile schools or private integrated schools. In these cases, to a greater or lesser degree, they structured their chronotope based on the experience of social adaptation.

Some of participants had applied to enrol in schools that were out of their neighbourhood zone with the expectation that they would have access to an education that would better prepare them for university. Jessica, Hine and Grace described their experience at school as a process of acquiring a particular habitus that would help them to succeed academically. For these participants being integrated to the school environment implied a process of differentiation from their original culture and incorporation of the academic culture expressed mainly in the social environment. Jessica showed how this process of habitus incorporation was mobilised by strategic purposes for success rather than the

desire to be entirely assimilated to the environment. She represented that in a picture in which she is the only different but beautiful penguin, with the title “Learning to socialize” (Fig 7.16):



Fig 7.16. Learning to socialize. Jessica

I came from a different background. They all had all the latest stuff all the latest clothes...umm...that’s important to you when you go to a high-school. They all spoke about overseas holidays and all the stuff that they have done [...] I felt like I was on the outside at first, because I didn’t share anything much in common [...] it took a while to find things in common with them until we had school camps and we found stuff to talk about. (Jessica)

Thus, the first feeling of being different turned into learning how to conform to contextual rules and how to relate with different people. As she stated naming their photos, Jessica’s school journey was lived as a process for “learning to study”, “learning to conform” and “learning to be independent”. To represent “learning to conform” she used a picture that imitated the symbol that the rock band “Pink Floyd” (In the movie “The Wall”) used to represent the authoritarian English school: a brick wall. However, in Jessica’s case, she saw that adaptation to the school environment, and not agreeing with the predominant values of her private school, was a useful tool to accomplish her future goals.

This is called “Learning to conform” [...] when I started high school I really didn’t fit in very well and I had to learn to conform in order to...um...in order to progress, I had to be one of them, like one square in a wall, one of the bricks instead of a circle or something [...] It was pretty important because I learned to fit in different places, wherever you go, you know! (Jessica)

Hine and Grace each had similar journeys at school, but in a different context. They both came from a rural background and they both had a Māori parent. They refused to enrol in their local schools and chose high decile schools in the city as a way to acquire what they considered to be a better education. They described their feeling of tension as when they felt like they were at the edges of different social groups. During school, Hine always avoided mixing with other Māori students, firstly, choosing not to enrol in a Māori secondary school and later, avoiding Te reo Māori as a subject because she felt that she could be involved in non-academic behaviour that could damage her future. Thus, school was represented mainly as a strategic possibility to find supportive peers and teachers, who helped her to progress, to leave her rural town, and to achieve university entrance:

The majority of other girls either dropped out before Year Thirteen, before we graduated or got pregnant. So we all wanted to leave the area and become successful [...] We always talked about how to push each other to pass, keep going with our studies, because some subjects we hated but we wanted to leave basically. (Hine)

Grace in turn, came from a similar background to Hine. She also avoided joining peer groups who exhibited disruptive behaviour. Finally, she got involved in a school programme that supported Māori students to engage with education, and it was there that she discovered her social and leadership skills that helped her to engage academically.

The programme was called “Tokano Teina”, which means “Big sister, little sister”. We gave [the younger ones] information about how the school works, making sure you are on time to classes. Just how most teachers want you to do in your homework, just helping them with these little bits, things like that. (Grace)

She felt that the support from other teachers and also from peers who were from different educational backgrounds to her own helped her to stop being disruptive at school and find the right pathway to achieve well in the future.

I had such good support, even though I was naughty sometimes my teachers always knew that I could do better, they continued to push me and motivate me. They gave me different things... yeah, I guess I got more personal development at school.

(Grace)

Also Hine and Grace felt strongly that their teachers and school authorities supported throughout their respective school journeys. Form teachers and the career councillors also played key roles in strengthening these participants' academic expectations and this enabled them to go onto university. This was particularly helpful in the case of Grace, who felt that her family was not confident about her university expectations.

Another position in regard to student diversity was noted by the participants who had attended low decile schools (Reuben, Lily and Steph). In these cases, the encounters with others who were different from them, was seen as something that widened their perspectives of a range of social issues. Lily for example, expressed fear about students from low decile or other ethnic groups. Initially, she did not want to mix with these students because she feared that she would be led astray. Ruby, on the other hand, saw the experiences of other students, such as youth pregnancy, truancy, etc. as a motivational trigger for her to do things differently and take pride in having achieved university entrance qualifications.

The experience of student diversity in New Zealand schools was highly valued by the participants. Sometimes they valued the experience in terms of it being a competitive opportunity to be more culturally aware than students from wealthier backgrounds. For example, Ruby commented that having direct knowledge of "Gang culture" was something that she had access to that people in high decile schools did not. As she stated:

Closer to home, theirs is a better mix of people; I'm a lot more culturally aware. [The other] school, it's a higher decile. I enjoyed [my] school, it was pretty 'Ghetto'.
(Ruby)

Mabel in turn, valued the opportunity to mix with people from other ethnicities and religions which she said provided a friendly environment within her school and increased her critical thinking.

[What I liked most was] maybe to be with my friends, because they have different religions. We always talk about differences and stuff and that was really interesting to [meet with] other people ... and have respect for them and understand [them]. I'm Christian. I grew up with the Bible and [I understand] how similar it is to the Koran... things like that. (Mabel)

Sophie, Dawn and Lily mentioned competition as one of the positive things that made them to do better at school. In New Zealand competition is presented as something that schools actively promote, as Sophie stated:

Something that motivated me to learn, it was not only their support, and encouragement and working together in a team, but it was also like another side, that I want to do well in comparison [with the other students]. They encourage competition, inter class competition [...] I think it appealed to my instinct and my personal motivation. (Sophie)

In summary, New Zealand participants' chronotopes are primarily situated in the complex field of peer relationships within the school context and these contexts are much more ethnically and socially diverse than in Chile. The encounter with different students was also seen as an opportunity to integrate a habitus that plays an important role in achieving university entrance level qualifications. This habitus however, involves distancing themselves from their original social and cultural fields. In other cases, the encounter with diverse students is an opportunity to widen social perspectives and distance themselves from the habitus of wealthier groups of students.

The participants also situated their narratives about their pedagogical experiences in terms of achieving their academic aspirations. Schools were presented as multiple physical and pedagogical spaces. The participants noted that their school tended to differentiate students according to their academic achievements (which was supportive for those who achieved to a high level but not so helpful for those who had been placed in low ability streams), different teaching approaches were applied and schools also offered places to rest from the academic or social pressure. In this context, despite feeling different, critical or even isolated within the school environment it was possible for the participants to find their own sense of place at school.

Chapter summary

The different levels of social diversity within schools in both countries mean that there were significant differences between Chilean and New Zealand school experiences. In Chile, the participants situated their narratives in terms of a struggle between normative forces (market-driven priorities, nationalism and social exclusion) and the student body (which tends to be socially homogenous). In New Zealand, the main tension took place within the student body. The participants tended to situate themselves in opposition to specific groups of students (who were either higher or lower in terms of social status) and specific teaching approaches.

The habitus produced in Chile reinforced a powerful sense of belonging to the student collective, and competition between peers was avoided. These participants were, in the main, strongly opposed to the institutional structure and valued teachers who they felt affinities with, as an extension of their family and social groups. The habitus produced in New Zealand reinforced students' integration into the institutional order (sometimes they brought this about as a deliberate strategy) but the effect is that working class students frequently positioned themselves at a distance from their own background, and tended to operate in isolation (personal or in small groups) rather than drawing a sense of solidarity from the collective. This was reinforced further by the ethos of competition between students. In addition, the New Zealand participants valued teachers who supported their aspirations and who also practiced a range of diverse, active and experiential teaching approaches.

The means by which normative control is exerted in New Zealand schools is less clear than in Chile. Schools are predominantly represented as a space in which participants found support and learnt that different approaches to learning are possible, which provided them with a sense of place. Resistance to the institutional order in New Zealand is also more subtle, nuanced and complex. Some participants tried to distance themselves from students with similar backgrounds in order to integrate socially with more well off students and also as a means of achieving well at school. Other students took refuge in their connections with other excluded groups and gained a sense of solidarity and belonging in that way.

Specific pedagogical strategies reinforced the different characteristics of the predominant habitus in both countries. In Chile, the organisation of schools in working class neighbourhoods leads to the creation of strong peer networks that reinforce the sense of belonging to a collective. In New Zealand, the promotion of competition between students and the streaming of students according to age, ability, gender or other factors reinforced more individualised educational trajectories rather than the collective trajectories seen in Chile.

This habitus is the base from which the different forms of imagined social capital that support students in the university are produced and activated. In the next chapter various forms of learning ecologies and imagined social capital are discussed and their role in supporting student attrition and attachment to the learning experience is outlined.

CHAPTER 8:

UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE, STUDY ECOLOGIES AND IMAGINED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Introduction

In Chapter Five, I explained that the forms of imagined social capital identified in this study are not conceived as fixed categories, but as spaces of confluence of individual chronotopes. A participant can produce different types of imagined social capital but I chose the type which is predominant in his/her discourse. These different types of imagined social capital allowed students to overcome the institutional barriers they found within their transitions and to achieve higher levels of engagement within the academic environment.

In the first section of this chapter, I identify the participants' study ecologies in both countries. To define the idea of "study ecology" I follow Matusov's (2009) notion of "learning ecology" which describes a teaching environment in which the traditional structure based on a teacher's authority is replaced by a polyphonic classroom. As discussed in Chapter Four, Bakhtin describes polyphony as spaces of dialogue shaped by an "open range of consciousness that represents different voices that are not subjected to the force of one discourse" (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 3). Thus, in a polyphonic classroom, all voices are recognised for their contribution to the learning experience. This reflective characteristic is what led Matusov to refer to them as "ecologies". They are an autonomous learning environment in which participants are aware of the polyphonic conditions of learning.

During their university journey, students choose specific study sites which supported them in acquiring study habits and responding to academic demands. However, these study sites were not only chosen based on a rationale and personal thinking. Students do not only stay in their places responding to academic demands, they "live" (Quinn, 2010) university places as polyphonic places which express the encounters and tension between different social discourses. Bakhtin did not understand discourse as a formal and abstract phenomenon, he understood discourse as a social phenomena enacted in a

communicative action in which multiple voices participate (Bakhtin, 1981). Similarly, I do not understand study places merely as a formal and practical action site. They provide insights into dispositions toward learning, as well as participants' ideological positions with regard to academic learning.

Study or learning ecologies are the main forms through which students appropriate and take some control over the university environment creating a new individual or collective environment. In this research, learning and study ecologies should be understood as similar terms only differentiated by their main function. Study ecologies are specifically related to places to study, while learning ecologies have a broader meaning in which other learning experiences are involved beyond academic studying. Learning ecologies are the spatial locations in which imagined social capital is materialised. Within learning ecologies participants find a place of connection between the academic experience and their social biography. They provide a spatial location to reflect the symbolic bridges students build between the social sphere and the academic sphere. Like study ecologies, they are also spaces in which the traditional authoritative teaching pattern is replaced by more equal relations in which participants as learners are active protagonists.

In the second section I described the institutional discourses that led participants to create different forms of imagined social capital and learning ecologies which supported them to progress in their studies. These are defined by real or symbolic relationships that help them to connect their social background with the academic environment. Imagined social capital connects institutional discourses with social discourses, thus enabling students to recreate their bonds with their sociocultural belonging and in that process, create new forms of learning, beyond the formal ones, within the university environment. According to the research questions, in this chapter I identify the institutional discourses, people and places in the university in which imagined social capital emerges. These forms of imagined social capital and learning ecologies provide a sense of belonging to the university environment and support student retention.

Chile: Studying as a social place

During the first year at university, the Chilean participants perceived differences between types of schools in relation to their educational knowledge. Those coming from prestigious state schools felt that they were better prepared than others who came from common scientific humanistic schools and technical schools. For students coming from technical schools or common state schools, the first period was difficult in terms of confronting totally unfamiliar concepts. They also experienced some difficulties relating to cognitive skills, such as memorising content and concentrating on their studies.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, most students in Chile did not identify secondary school as pleasant places connected with academic learning experiences. Moreover, valued teachers or learning experiences were frequently found outside formal educational institutions. Consistently, during university, some participants created a sort of counter-academic disposition. During the group interview they agreed to prioritise a pragmatic use of university, based on the principle that it provides certificates but actual learning was in “real life”. Some critiqued the excessive value of certificates as the only way to assess lecturer performance, as Alejandra stated:

I don't know if a good lecturer is the one who has many certificates. Here in the university this is the criteria to choose a lecturer, to have one PhD and several Masters! If they don't so they are useless, but I think that they apart to knowing history, they have to know how to teach it [...] helping you to make your own reflection. (Alejandra)

As discussed in Chapter Seven, many Chilean students had a habitus that avoids student competition and distinction, particularly with regard to academic achievements. At times, this was expressed through a discourse of disengagement from academic activities. For example, they stated that they used to come late to class, studied just the necessary material, or did not respond to the teachers' expectations, as Monica and Rodrigo describe:

Most of us were first generation university students, and we hated other people who said, 'look! I am university student!' And they thought that they succeeded [...] For us being at the university was just one more thing [...] we study for the test one day before and the rest of the time just enjoy life. (Monica)

I am not one who is always looking for something to read. Sometimes I buy a book, but reading does not make me happy, I prefer to go out, hang out, playing football, watch a movie, that stuff. (Rodrigo)

Similarly to school, peers at university were presented as the main source of support. The fact that the curriculum was rigid with limited subject options to choose enabled them to join the same students every day, particularly during the first years. This helped them to create strong bonds and stable study groups along their transition to university. Studying was actively lived as a social process. Muriel described the importance that some programmes gave to collective essays or research:

These pictures represent a group talking, because it is supposed that you learn when you relate to others. Teamwork here is huge, the main one. Since you start in first year they tell you, OK, join in groups! (Muriel)

Three participants (Pablo, Muriel and Camilo) mentioned the relationship with people from other socioeconomic backgrounds as a significant contribution to their educational improvement. Muriel for example, felt that she could contribute by speaking with younger students about her own working experience and a more defined notion of teaching. At the same time, she learnt the techniques of debate from those who came from better schools. There is a programme organised by students who institutionalise peer support during the first year, as Camilo described:

Here we have a senior student who tutored us during the first year. They are always helping us. [...] They would help us how to do our essays [...] how to get information at the student office, they would remind me about important dates. (Camilo)

However, the strong influence of study groups also could be seen as a barrier to individual progression. The transition from one group to another can be difficult, as Marcela stated:

We trust each other [her study group] It will be really hard for me if I don't have papers with them next year. (Marcela)

Along the same lines, places to study were conceived as places to socialise and connect with others, rather than just sites for individual study. Some of them valued the noise in the library and understood it as a place of social encounter, as Dario described:

The library is not a monotonous library where everyone is silent. It's a place to study more than a place to read, it's noisy and I like that, you can talk. No one is asking you to be silent. This is the Faculty of Humanities and a lot of engineers come here, technicians come here, full of people! (Dario)

Some participants who thought that the library was too quiet sought other spaces where they could work in groups that were more relaxed and less controlled. Muriel and her classmates found a classroom where they felt more at ease than in the library:

I like this place, it's funnier, because in the library is like, "shut up". There are many people here we are alone. I like this room. (Muriel)

In the library, participants (Marcela, Jorge, Dario and Alejandra) also found an important support in librarians. These are mature people who had worked there for a long time and who came from a similar background to them. Thus, librarians guided their use of the library when they were not sure how to manage it. Librarians also represented adult figures that were closer than academic staff members. Alejandra described librarians in school and university as "allies against the power". Mauricio called them "auntie" which is the cultural term to use when one feels close to the adult:

This is 'auntie' Olguita, who is like the historic worker here, in the Faculty of Humanities. She is in her sixties. You come without knowing the title, just the author, and she would ask you, "but what was it about?, is it this one?, this one?" Or

I would say, I need a biography about that, about what? She would say, “Mmmm, let me see”. She goes inside and comes back with the book.

Two participants (Marcela and Alejandra) described a process of appropriation of the library in which the first years were a time of exploration, characterised by the irregular use of the institutional facilities. The boundaries between places to socialise and places of study were hard to define. Two participants, described the first months at the university as a moment of getting together in the library to do what one of them called “streamer study”, that is, unproductive study, in which time is mainly spent getting to know each other. Alejandra stated that from this point she progressed to finding other places at the library where she could be more individually focused (Fig 8.2). Marcela in turn preferred to study in the Faculty garden.

In this context, individual places of study were not an active presence in most participants' chronotopes. When reviewing the images all across Chilean participants, it is hard to find individual study settings. One of the elements that influenced this is the different physical conditions they perceived when comparing different careers at the university. For example, in comparison to scientific careers, the Faculty of Humanities only had one classroom where they have their disciplinary subjects (History, Spanish, etc.). When they have their teaching subjects, they have to move to a different faculty. This also contributed to creating a sense of lack of place in their daily life at university.

For example, Alejandra, constructed her chronotope considering places of study as one of the main elements. She replicated this in her representation of school where she also showed herself using different places of study, mainly with other students, such as the library, corridors or small courtyards. At the university, she moved between isolated institutional places, such as the individual rooms in the library, to collectively appropriated and improvised places, such as building corners and cafeterias. Alejandra showed her favourite places in the library or the corner of one of the university courtyards. She also used other faculty courtyards as a way to avoid the social pressure of their peers from history teaching:

One place I like is the Metallurgic courtyard (See Fig 8.1)...previously I used to go there just to take a coffee or something, but the first time I studied there I went with one of my classmates, starting last year. We studied there from 9am to the test time. We lunched there this day. In this test I think it was the first time that I was very, very sure about what I was doing, it was the first time that I thought that I was writing what the lecturer wanted me to do. (Alejandra)



Fig 8.1: Finding a place to study at the Metallurgic courtyard.
Alejandra.



Fig 8.2: Finding a place to study at the Individual room, Library.
Alejandra

Photocopies are one of the main investments that Chilean students have to make in the university. The Faculty is surrounded by several “photocopy shops” where students go to make copies of their texts. Lecturers and tutors leave a copy of the books needed at these shops that the photocopier assistant administers. Each group of students choose one photocopy shop, mainly based on the relationship they establish with the photocopier assistant there. Therefore, the photocopier assistant played an important role providing a group of students with a welcoming environment connected with the university, while remaining outside it. In the photocopy shop they make copies together, they talk and they even had parties sometimes. Alejandra described how significant the relationship with this assistant was, in whom she saw her working class origin reflected:

I have learnt a lot from him, he is so kind. He has helped me when I had no money, he sells me on credit and I pay him later. I have strong friendship bond with him [...] we have partied in his shop... and he is also older than me, he is not a child, he is

over thirty, so you can come to him and ask for an advice [...] and he is a man who has worked hard.

With regard to the contribution of lecturers to building study ecologies, in Chile, their influence varied according to the programme in which participants were enrolled. Participants coming from Foundation Programmes, Primary teaching and Early Childhood tended to value the role of lecturers and approached them more often. In secondary programmes, such as Spanish and History, lecturers were mentioned less and participants did not get actively involved with them. For example, Rodrigo (from Spanish), said that he was not recognised by lecturers. Alejandra in turn (from History) said that some lecturers used to socialise with students in the cafeteria but she preferred to keep apart.



Three participants considered that lecturers had played a more important role in their educational experience. Camilo was in Primary Teaching, Carol enrolled in a Foundation Programme, Primary and History and Muriel was in an Early Childhood Teaching Programme. Camilo showed pictures of his classrooms as a representation of the power of lecturers to affirm his vocational choice and to develop his teaching critical skills: "I think that each teacher either reinforced your ideas or just destroyed them", he states.

Muriel, in turn, represented herself in the action of learning into the classroom while presenting in front of the class, sharing her knowledge with others, doing her writing and actively dialoguing with the lecturers. In doing that, she showed that teaching classes were opportunities to fully experience the act of learning, seeing and hearing the lecturer's voice and participating in the dialogue as a way to be recognised. Muriel was invited by a lecturer to join her research team which she found to be a very motivating environment. She admired this lecturer for being different to the rest of the lecturers; more active, interested in organising seminars and setting up associations with community organisations. She also discovered a strong motivation to succeed after being invited by a lecturer to become involved in her research. In doing her essays, she enjoyed learning and following APA norms which she represented as an exciting discovery.

Confirming this intense emotional engagement with academic tasks she called her storyboard: “To live learning” .

Carol was recruited from her school to be enrolled in a special programme to provide alternative access to university. It had been hard for her to respond to academic demands. However, she took pictures that represented different staff members at school and places to socialize at the Faculty of the Foundation Programme. At this place, she met lecturers, secretaries and cleaners that made her feel like she was in a “family”, a warm and supportive environment. Beyond this faculty she felt the whole university was unfamiliar terrain.

That’s the thing, in the foundation programme, it’s like a family, everyone knows each other [...] the foundation programme is the best! The foundation programme and whoever works there, from when I started until now they have been an anchor. The Curriculum Coordinator, the cleaners, the Head of School, the Deputy Head of School, the last Head of School, Enrique! Brilliant! The only one! The Foundation idol! He is a person from whom one can learn and be enriched! (Carol) (Figs 8.3 and 8.4)

	
<p>Fig 8.3: Supportive secretary. Carol</p>	<p>Fig 8.4: Socializing at the Foundation Programme</p>

The Foundation Programme area was also the place where Carol came into contact with supportive lecturers who took into account the low educational level of their school:

We needed them to explain to us with apples, with fingers, with whatever they had [...] Professor Manuel explained like that. He also worked with children, was more didactic, he gave clear guidelines; he was more approachable, so we could understand him easily. (Carol)

In summary, for Chilean participants, finding their own study places and relationships was a slow process. The habitus shaped at school which avoided academic distinction among students and resistance to the institutional structures was still operating at the university. This was expressed in a discourse of disengagement with academic activities in some participants. Within university, team-work was an important support and it was also promoted by institutions. Accordingly, individual places of study were marginal in relation to collective places of study. Students use their available social capital to progressively control learning services and academic activities. However, these social networks come from liminal spaces and characters rather than formal ones. Librarians and the photocopier assistants represented bridging figures between the academic sphere and the working class sphere. They provided participants with material support, guidance and a welcoming environment in the context of a university which was felt as unfamiliar terrain.

On the other side, the relationships with lecturers seemed to be influenced by the type of programmes they were enrolled in. Classrooms and staff members had a stronger presence in the case of Early Childhood, Foundation and Primary Students. Lecturers played an important role creating warmer environments or stimulating academic activities in which they felt emotionally involved and recognised. These study ecologies gave them a sense of protection, guidance or autonomy and were valued in opposition to instructional, formal and teaching centred spaces and those that did not take into account differences between their different academic levels.

New Zealand: Emotional study ecologies

As discussed in Chapter Seven, in New Zealand some schools were seen to be supportive institutions that provided participants with a range of options to progress in their learning and raise their expectations. In other cases, participants struggled to feel welcome in the school environment. This struggle, in some cases, lasted only the initial years, while others never felt they belonged and had to wait until leaving school to overcome their isolation. During university, some participants continued to feel as if they did not belong, but the focus was mainly about having to adapt to academic demands. Participants in New Zealand tended to see the university experience as a pathway to personal progression. The narrative showed mainly a personal experience in which some passed through a difficult moment during the first year and showed how they had learnt how to manage the system along the process.

Jessica is a good example of this transition from social integration to personal progression. She named each picture with an idea of what the pictures expressed. School pictures were called “learning to study”, “learning to conform to rules” and “learning to socialize”. At school, she described her experience of coming from a working class background and learning how to adapt to a private school where most of girls came from wealthier families. The experience in the university in turn, reflected other sorts of goals, such as “becoming someone better”, “planning to study and leisure time”, “self-motivation from within”, “setting goals and reaching for them”, “total independence” and “finding yourself”.

Some participants also described their university time (in the teaching programme) as a stage of development in which their previous low interest in achievement at school was overcome (Sophie, Lily, Alan and Chloe). In the same way, some progressed from an initial confusion they had experienced regarding their interest when leaving school (Jessica, Chloe, Alan, Mabel, Sophie, Adrian and Lily), to more clearly defined career aspirations after passing through other study and work experiences.

The idea of biography as personal progression is reinforced by the structure of some bachelor programmes. The participants that took a degree before enrolling in teaching

programmes had very few occasions to work in groups. As Melissa stated: “There were not actual group assignments in my degree, ever!” Moreover, the flexible curricular pattern existent in New Zealand offers students the opportunity to choose a wide range of subjects according to their interests. This creates unique learning routes which prevented them from building stable study groups with peers.

Places to socialize with others tended to be restricted to spaces of study or next to them, such as the computer room or the library. Some showed cafeterias or the university courtyard as places where they used to pause between classes. They did not include other spheres to socialize such as social participation, clubs, religion or cultural participation. In this context, only Lily showed images of recreation; people singing at the university hall. Amelia showed the gymnasium as a significant place but this was an experience focused on her own feelings more than in building relationships with others. Mabel in turn thought that in her university “there is not enough time to make friends”:

I loved going to the Gym after uni just because it allows me to think about myself and forget about the assignments for an hour, exercise and feel well about myself, this is also good for [...] stress for assignments. Instead of taking a break and watch TV, I go to a Gym; it's another stress release for me. (Amelia)

As noted in Chapter Six, during the first year of university they struggled to learn how to respond to academic demands, particularly related to writing essays and all the tasks associated with that (searching on the internet, writing references and others). Some of these students coming from low decile schools felt they had experienced different preparation than those coming from higher decile schools. However, all agreed that schools did not prepare them well for the demands of university. The aspects that were related with this weak preparation were diverse. Some low decile former students said that their schools did not have enough structure (Lily and Sophie). In other cases, they criticised the learning approach of the NCEA system as not being consistent with university demands (Hine and Mabel). They thought that the NCEA system was useful for them to attain credits. However, the system restricted their possibilities of creating innovative approaches to school subjects. They argued that the NCEA was focused on students learning a set of rules so they would know how to respond to the tests. Thus, they felt they did not have the productive and deep approach to learning that they had

during the first years of secondary school. As a consequence, when they started university they struggled to respond to the challenge to develop their own perspectives. Thus, their representations of university places were strongly related to their journeys in which they learned to meet the demands and manage the tertiary system. Hine showed a picture downloaded from the internet of a woman with her head on the desk surrounded by papers and she stated:

This one just basically represents all my time at the university: studying. In my first year I had the first time experience of staying up until 4 am to finish an assignment, it was terrible! I hadn't had any sort of caffeine; I had four cups of coffee. It was terrible! But that was more a learning experience for me, like time management, obviously, that also reminded me about how to get used to university life. High school was such an easy ride! I was complaining about it but it was so easy. And then coming to university it was so much harder.

In this journey, academic staff members were a significant support in their learning progression. For those who studied in Bachelor Degree Programmes before doing teaching as a Graduate Diploma, lecturers were represented as very distant, "academic" characters that were hard to approach. This was different in the Teaching Programmes, particularly in some universities with smaller class groups. In these cases, lecturers were important in their study progression if they provided good advice during the application process and first moments at university, if they gave "extra" time after classes, had a personal approach and were connected to their practicum experiences.

Participants also found support in tutors and Student Learning Support Office staff to cope with academic demands. In these spaces they obtained confidential support that helped them without exposing their doubts in front of peers. The fact that lecturers sometimes were the ones who also did the tutoring made this support more significant for some of them, as Grace stated:

I've gone to every tutorial, pretty much, I tried to go to every single one! Because I found it is not like a classroom environment. The class is more like one to one; they

give you more specific information, because I had no idea what they were talking about in lectures and so, please! Explain to me! Otherwise I failed, I really liked the tutorials.

As discussed earlier, some of New Zealand students felt they had no academic profile. Some of them chose their programmes because they knew that they were more practical, or they were open to alternative teaching approaches. Reuben is an example of that. As described in Chapter Seven Reuben showed in his storyboard different places at school which provided a “practical learning” experience in contrast to the conventional academic one which he found particularly hard. During the teaching programme, he felt that he learnt the theoretical base of these approaches in subjects such as the “Multi-lateral child” where he experienced arts creativity to understand the way children learn.

Ruby and Evie, also represented themselves as “non-academic”. They showed the “Gateway programme building” as one of the main learning landscapes at school. Through practicum experiences at the university Ruby got involved in some work experience in early childhood centres that she valued highly. In these centres she could developed her skills of understanding children and teaching:

These two particular children took me about nine months to get to know. Once I thought she hated me because she is quite, quite...I always thought that she was a strange kid. It was kind of learning for me that I always thought that she wasn't strange or didn't like me but I think it was just time, kids just need time. That's learning. (Ruby)

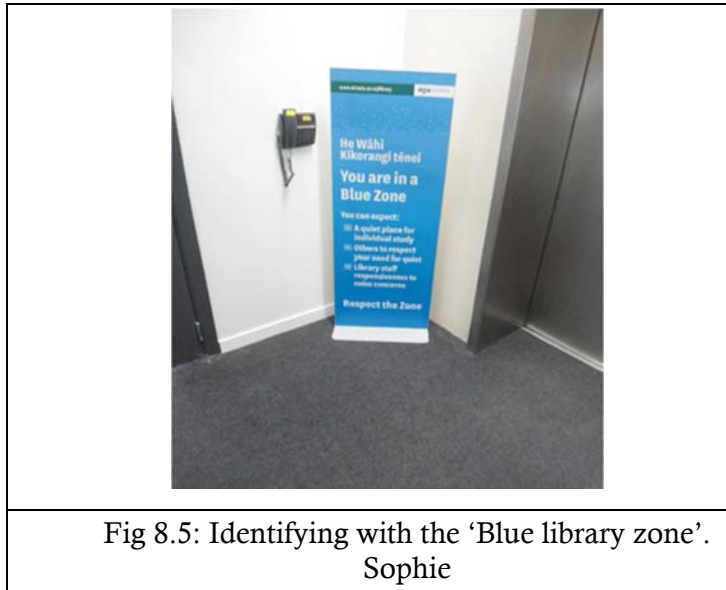
During university, the intense and diverse practicum experiences enabled participants to reinforce practical approaches to learning to define their own way to teach and relate with children. In both cases, aspects such as “love”, and “natural knowledge” structured a specific approach to teaching. They both struggled to pass in all the subjects, however, during university practical oriented subjects supported them to access a sort of knowledge that was easily applicable to teaching activities and that connected actively with their teaching perspective.

Beyond these experiences connected with the university curriculum, they defined other significant study ecologies that helped them to build a sense of place in a university context huge and difficult to control. Sophie for example, showed a picture of her Faculty under a beautiful sunrise. This represented that she felt the Faculty was a “home” in contrast to the main campus in which she had felt stressed, choosing wrong papers and studying subjects that were too hard, as she stated:

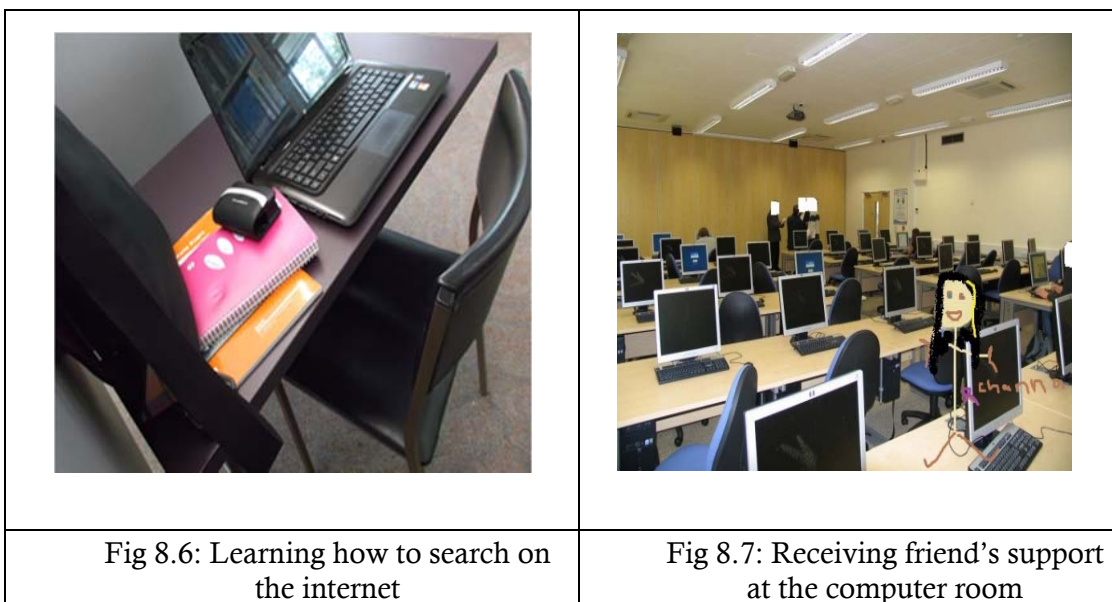
This is the entrance [to my faculty], [...] because this feels like home, a little bit more, these days [...] It just feels that I know what I am doing, when I am doing the course I kind of know what to expect [...] I know where things are, doing the papers that I want to do. (Sophie)

All participants included pictures of the library or the computer room. These institutional spaces were not only places to be supported, but places that they identified with and had some emotional attachment to. Sophie, for example, had a chronotope which focused exclusively on educational institutions. She represented herself as trying to build a wide institutional network to support her educational journey (student services, tutoring, Student Learning Support and others). As part of this journey, she occupied spaces at the library that helped her to feel more structured and provided her with a sense of belonging:

This is the library [...] My significant area that I identified with and I had roughly the same seat, at the same table, on the same side, every single day! I repeated the same every day, blue is individual, like silent study and then green is group work so you know which is going to be louder [...] and I was more a blue person. (Sophie) (Fig 8.5)



Across different storyboards some of the students underlined spaces and symbols of personal or a more collective study, such as their laptop on the desk and the computer room, in which they studied with friends. Grace showed her laptop as a representation of the process to learn how to search information on the internet (Fig 8.6). Ruby presented study ecologies in which she participated with other students. She underlined the support received from a friend coming from a higher income background (Fig 8.7).



Some images showed specific moments of what could be called an intense experience of learning. In these moments they encountered a moment that enabled full concentration or productivity in which they experience the joy of learning. Lily described her experience in a silent room at the library:

In first year there was an awesome part of uni that is already shut down [...] people are really scared about the volume, no one talks to anyone else, it's really silent. That was my favourite place to study when I started at university and all that was happening. I just liked it because it was dead silent, and there wasn't any phone reception, you are with all these books and all these influences on your thinking just inspire you to start studying. (Lily)

In other cases, there were physical milestone that connected them with the experiences of progression and achievement.

All the important assignments are held in boxes. If you come to the university this is the second most important thing you have to learn. These weird feelings every time you go to the box because if you handed an assignment that's when the true feelings come up, you know if you have done well, your best, enough work, if you have enough references, you know if you read enough. (Amelia) (Fig 8.8)



Fig 8.8: (Essay box). Sense of effort and improvement. Amelia.

In contrast to Chile, private spaces appeared on the pictures too. One (Lily) showed herself studying in their bedroom at the university hall. This connection between private spaces and institutional spaces primarily reflected the value placed on living on campus (those who moved from a different city or town) which provided a more active connection of students with the university experience. One student (Grace), who also moved from another city, showed herself studying with her boyfriend at their apartment, representing the connection between their family project and study project. This is particularly significant in the case of first generation students who usually struggle to find links between academic and family spaces (Lara, 1992; London, 1989, 1992; Rendon, 1992; Rodriguez, 1975) For example, in contrast to the examples given above; another student in New Zealand (Ruby) showed a train as a way to represent her motivation when leaving university heading home.

In summary, similarly to Chilean students, New Zealand students described a progressive adaptation to study places and study facilities. The habitus incorporated during school times operated in a new form in the university context. In this context, participants' narrative positions were mainly individual and less collective. This was also reinforced by some programmes which did not promote collaborative work or by learning routes in which they did not build stable groups.

Study ecologies primarily showed them making use of university facilities in "their own way" or, in a couple of cases, studying in their homes or bedrooms. Their use of university facilities showed how they made connections with their own personal routines and gained a sense of control over specific facilities. This helped them to cope with university as a place that sometimes made them feel overwhelmed. They took control of these places describing them through an "emotional type of discourse" linked to their identity. The use of private and domestic spaces reflected their capacity to build bridges between private or personal places and institutional experiences, which also showed a significant level of control over their academic journey.

Imagined social capital in Chile and New Zealand

In this section, I define the main types of imagined social capital that emerged from the participants' narratives. These forms of imagined social capital defined continuities between secondary school and university experiences. In both countries they appealed to wider social discourses than those which university spaces represent. These are discourses that connect with their social or cultural background but do not reproduce its forms. As Quinn (2010), stated, the university provides students with a new space in which social discourses are recreated creating new spaces of belonging. Students build "open communities" (Quinn, 2005; 2010) that help them to find a place in the university without being assimilated to the new environment (Quinn, 2010). Imagined social capital can emerge or produce specific learning ecologies in which students reinforce the bridges between the academic and the social sphere. These learning ecologies are usually located in liminal spaces which connect formal and informal ways of learning.

Chile: Imagined social capital as a social cause

In Chapter Six, I described how Chilean participants' habitus reinforce the sense of belonging with their peers and positioned students in opposition or distance to the school institution. Their university experiences were more complex. Although the resistance to the institutional structure persisted, universities provided them with an opportunity to find a sense of belonging within the academic environment through connecting with some of the spatial environments or teaching discourses.

Institutional identity and history played an important role in the way participants constructed their imagined social capital (Pablo, Alejandra, Monica, Hernan, Jorge and Dario). Nine of the participants (Dario, Julieta, Jorge, Marcela, Franco, Rodrigo, Monica, Alejandra and Carol) come from the "Traditional University",²⁴ a public university that was founded in the nineteenth century as a national university. Its former role was to offer vocational programmes for primarily working class students. Nowadays, it provides degree majors but still receives a higher number of working class first

²⁴ To protect the confidentiality of participants I have termed Chilean universities as "Traditional" and "Teaching" universities.

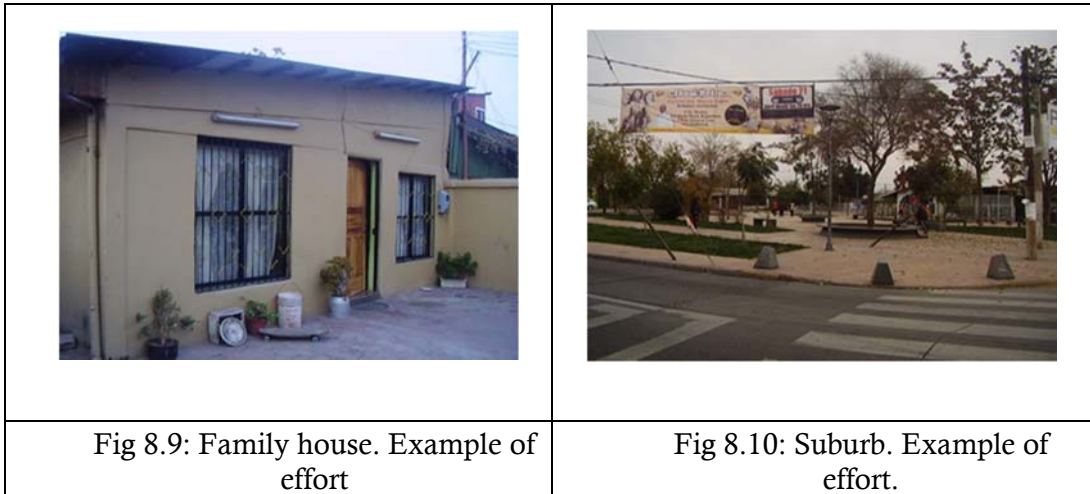
generation students than other state prestigious universities (Brunner, 2009). The Traditional University has also led the way in creating affirmative programmes that open alternative ways to access university to low income students (Gil & Bach, n.d). Nowadays, the university is one of the most social and politically active academic centres in the capital city.

Three participants came from the “Teaching University” (Pablo, Camilo and Muriel). Historically, this university has been the main provider of teacher education in Chile; most of its students came from working class backgrounds. The University is also known for its political activism.

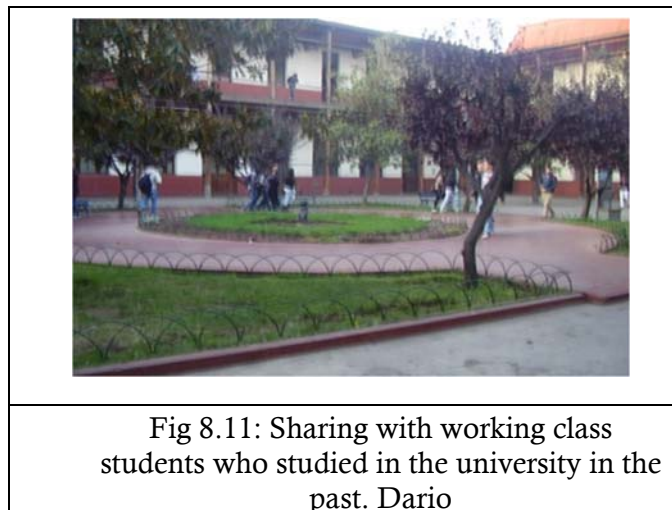
Six participants (Dario, Jorge, Franco, Monica and Alejandra) said that they chose their university for its history of social inclusion or for being central sites of the educational social movement which impacted the country in 2006 and 2011. The history of both the teaching university and the traditional university gave these participants the opportunity to feel that the whole institution had responded to a narrative of social struggle for justice. This narrative was expressed in the student organisation, some of the lecturers’ discourses and through symbolic features of the university buildings. Thus, participants found an “open community” (Quinn, 2005, p.6) connected with specific social and meaningful scenarios of their own biographies such as their original suburb, their political community or their former socially active school.

Dario, for example, presented the picture of his suburb and house as the starting point of his chronotope (Figures 8.9 and 8.10) representing both the closeness of his family and the spirit of improvement within his larger social community. He emphasized the “social meaning” of his educational choices throughout the interviews. Thus, his school and university were chosen because they represented the struggle of working class young people and their efforts to improve and succeed:

People from my suburb have many hopes and dreams. They want to change the area from marginal suburb to a city suburb. I have realised that the suburb has improved. I have many former classmates with babies, four out of four friends have babies, but all of them are studying, trying to get a technical certificate. (Dario)



Thus, Dario showed a great deal of continuity in his chronotope through his selection and perception of educational institutions which were always and persistently associated with the “social meaning” that motivated his life project. He chose his prestigious state school for being one of the most important sites of the educational movement. In his prestigious state school he also discovered the “social meaning” of teaching through committed staff members who supported working class students like him to achieve. Through photographs for this study, he showed that he is an active observer, capable of engaging with the university in ways that reinforced his sense of belonging with his social class. He described how wall paintings that referred to historical social struggles (Figure 8.11) were a reflection of his “mythological community” (Quinn, 2005, p.10) of working class people which is also the final destiny of his teaching vocation, based on his desires for social justice.



Choosing to sit in the Faculty Old Courtyard, he symbolically shared with all the working class students that walk through this courtyard in the past. Through this he showed perceptions of continuity between his own personal effort and the effort of those who had been there before him:

I like to be there [...] many people have been there, many young people, many young people full of expectations, I think this place represents me. (Dario)

At the same time, he expressed his social commitment by working in a programme that provided alternative routes to the university to working class people, one pathway that he himself followed before enrolling in the teaching programme.

In other cases, the imagined social capital built at university is linked to a “political” (educative) community that emerged during school times. Monica, showed pictures full of people, with whom she socialised through her political activism in her organisation and at university. Through political activism she found a response to the social conflicts and isolation that she experienced at school and discovered a voice to confront social injustices. She decided to enrol in the Traditional University because of its political history, expecting that it would be the next step to develop her political awareness.

In the university, Monica encountered other students who became political and social mentors. During university she also experienced some political events that acted as “transitional rituals” to becoming part of the new community:

We contested the assembly resolution and we, as a school, called students to take the university [...] and that caused a chain effect and other schools joined the strike [...] This experience was like walking the tightrope, it was like putting myself between the sworn and the wall, it was like...do you really believe in what you are doing? Or will you get behind? [...] The strike was that, I also got a bronchopneumonia, having

cold at night, suffering hunger. That's how, like "Che"²⁵ says you are capable to postpone you for the rest of the people. (Monica)

Thus, Monica built an imaginary social resistance strongly rooted in university social life. She represented herself enjoying university life and always surrounded by other students from whom she could learn. In the credits of her storyboard, she only stated a long list of their classmates and comrades in the organisation.

However, the same forces that attracted her to the university environment lately pushed her out. After two years at the university she felt that being there it was not enough to fulfil her social cause. It was necessary to break the bond with the "Bourgeois Institution". She decided to drop out to go back to a real working class life. She worked in a gas station for some months. However, after comparing the level of exploitation that these sorts of jobs imply and a future career as a teacher, she decided to go back to university. She decided to express her political action from her role as a university student and as a future teacher.

Although using a strong counter-academic discourse, her cohesive social cause narrative showed how this had shaped her interest in certain subjects since she was at school, where she found ideological connections with her way of thinking. At the same time she felt that it was easy for her to approach teachers and lecturers with her own opinion and advocate for other students when necessary.

Other students, coming from technical schools, who were not so active in social activism at secondary school, also felt a sense of belonging with the "social narrative" of their university. Franco, Jorge and Camilo were attracted by the social activism and history when they chose their universities. Through these public universities, they found an opportunity to follow their academic vocation after previously being involved in non-qualified work experience for a while. University also provided an opportunity to meet people with similar interests and similar teaching expectations. Franco thought that the Teaching University, as a state university, would offer him more pluralistic and critical approaches to teaching, which would be in contrast to the dominant approaches found at school. As one of his pictures showed, he hoped and he could finally meet other students

²⁵ She refers to "Che Guevara".

to whom he could discuss and develop a reflection about his future role as a teacher, as he stated:

I would like to break the authoritarian teaching role, I would like to offer students not only one perspective, but a second one, a third one and even a fourth one...I like public universities because these invite students to question. (Franco)

Franco and Camilo included several pictures of the statues and wall paintings in the university. These artistic milestones symbolize the history of the university as a place historically committed to working class students and social change. Camilo described a moment in which he decided to explore the history of famous characters of the university (for example, the moment when the Chancellor stepped down after the army coup in 1973) which helped him to make more sense of the place where he was studying. These historical presences (reflected for example in wall paintings that students have painted. see Fig 8.12) to which they share their daily life at the university made them feel part of a political community built in past times in which, as Jorge stated “something new was being created”.



Fig 8.12: Mapuches (Indigenous main group), students, miners, peasants all standing up united. Wall painting, Faculty of Humanities. Jorge.

Participants were also involved in the educational movement which involved all universities and schools in Chile, in 2011. In their university, the movement was comprised of various experiences and locations such as self-organised lectures, assemblies, debates and occupations. During occupations, the educational movement

was not only an opportunity to collectively express their protest against social exclusion, but was also an opportunity to break the boundaries between people coming from other careers and to encounter lecturers who might join the cause. During occupations they also learnt respect for others and to follow rules to relate within a group:

[Talking about the places they were during occupation] We would sleep there during the occupation, we would do assemblies too, it was a place where I learnt things, it was not only debate [...] with people who I would have never meet, from geography, electricity, mechanic, we would live in a sort of utopia, we lived the music, we lived something different, you learn how to respect others, how to cook. Mainly respect people. (Jorge)

However, the commitment towards social justice for working class students in these protests was at times more complex than it initially appeared. Alejandra for example, passed through two stages, one of active involvement in the protest movement as a secretary in the assemblies, and a second one in which she distanced herself. Thus, her process of engagement in the academic environment has two faces clearly reflected in her storyboard. Throughout her pictures of school and university she showed a tension between supporting the movement and its demands with a chronotope that showed a stronger commitment towards focusing on her studies. She showed places that she creatively found and used with friends, sometimes to teach them, which were far from socially crowded or controlled spaces.

This double playing of distance and involvement is consistent with her critique of the “student culture” that predominated at university. After a lengthy occupation in 2011, she started to feel overwhelmed with the dynamic of the movement and had a personal crisis that almost made her drop out. This was fuelled by the inconsistencies she perceived between the movement’s discourse and the reality of her working class family and community:

They talk about inequalities, social justice, income distribution, poverty, how poor people live. Yeah, we are poor, that speech! But you realise that their Daddy sends

them money because they are in the strike – this is actually to play politics!

(Alejandra)

What Alejandra is revealing, echoes Bourdieu's (1964) description of the way through which the multiplication of complex "political" references within university is another way through which students conceal their most fundamental differences of social class.

In Alejandra's case, the confrontation with the styles and discourses of the educational movement made her pull-out of university (during occupations) to go back for a short while to work. At this time she found a sense of authenticity in the working class labour force which was consistent with her own personal and social history. Later, in her role of teacher student, she expressed her social commitment through her participation in a community based pre-university. Through this experience she defined her teaching vocation as she was able to use some teaching techniques, but she also found a sense of community with the students who attended:

They were guys who would go there because they really needed, because they wanted to learn! So we had the right environment to teach. However, it was not only that that moved me, also to share with them, drink a coffee, joking, they would tell me their troubles with life and family. (Alejandra)

Some lecturers also contributed to different forms of imagined social capital, through that the subjects they taught or their reflections upon their social cause. Participants valued lecturers who had an approach to teaching that was different to the predominant approach in secondary school; authoritarian, formulaic or simply weak. In the university, they felt that most lecturers "have plenty of knowledge" (Alejandra) despite not all of them having the best pedagogy and methodologies. They valued lecturers who promoted space for debates and more heteroglossic and reflective approaches. Consistent with the social imaginary to which they felt connected with the university, lecturers in particular subjects reinforced a narrative that connected with a history of social struggle and the search for a more authentic identity, as Carol stated:

We always were taught about Euro centrism in social perspective and we need to break with it, we have to create our own identity, like in the popular subjects, the

Latin-American subjects... mainly the subjects we had in First Year; Pre-Columbian Chile, Pre-Columbian America. (Rodrigo)

However, subjects which were not directly linked to this critique and were part of the core curriculum, such as Latin or linguistics in the case of Spanish teaching, tended to be more difficult for them. Franco dropped out from the Philosophy Programme because he could not cope with core subjects such as logic. Monica, who was enrolled in Spanish teaching, did not like Linguistics and Latin. She joked saying that Latin “is dead, so please let it sleeps”.

Similarly to what happened in secondary school, they also valued lecturers with whom they built a bond as equals, those who used an informal and relaxed style, appearing to be “your mate” (Alejandra) or with whom they could build a “friendship” (Franco). This reinforced the idea that the lecturer role was also connected with the “working class imaginary community” that made sense of their educational experience.

In summary, this form of imagined social capital created in Chile connected students with spaces and relationships that built bridges between institutional and non-institutional learning experiences. In the first form, imagined social capital as social cause, students found appealing figures within institutional landscapes which connected them to a social and historical process to which they wanted to belong. These included historical characters, historical social struggles and the history of students or staff members who have occupied the university with whom they gained a sense of connection in an otherwise foreign place. These are human presences or voices with which they shared their daily life in the university. They learnt from them and they were also a source of motivation to explore more about the social meaning of studying teaching in that university. The educational movement was a way to recreate this social struggle in the present, creating an alternative learning place aside the formal learning sphere. These ‘lived histories’ strengthened their commitment to a particular approach to teaching; critical and connected with social identity. At the same time, significant lecturers who represented this particular approach were the ones who engaged them in the teaching programme.

Matusov (2009) described “learning ecologies” as polyphonic spaces in which the centripetal forces of the teacher-centred classroom are overcome. In the case of these participants, through their learning ecologies, they connected with symbolic figures, places, groups of peers and lecturers which contributed to supporting them in the university. Imagined social capital as social cause situated participants in the midst of diverse sources of learning; the university courtyard, the political group, some subjects related to identity and culture and the pre-university institutions. What characterised these learning ecologies was that they all enable students to see their own social biography reflected in the university institution. However, recognising the dialogical condition of such places is a struggle. As Quinn (2010) states, in some contexts, imagined social capital can become a trap which places obstacles in the way between students and formal learning contexts. Quinn states that sometimes students feel that education can be a “useless compensation” to the inevitable loss of their “community” (Quinn, 2010, p.7). In the case of these students, they pull themselves apart from the university as a way to recover a sense of authenticity with their working class origin. In several moments in the biography of these participants there was a clash between institutional discourses and their own approaches to learning. In these cases, some of them finally dropped out until they found the right moment or the right place to return to university studies later and could re-build that connection again.

New Zealand: Imagined social capital and cultural diversity

As discussed earlier, in New Zealand, the school narratives of several participants underlined their distance with the predominant mode of learning within secondary school. However, most schools provided spaces in which alternative forms of learning could be expressed. These were learning settings that also helped them to obtain the credits needed to progress in their studies. When they were involved in university, the access to a new position and increasing levels of cultural capital enabled them to articulate value and define these alternative approaches to learning that germinated during school.

However, curricular and teaching elements were not the only ones that helped them to achieve that. The social and cultural students’ diversity at university widened their

world's perspectives. At the same time, certain symbolic elements present in the university landscape make them feel that the institution value different cultural perspectives like theirs. Therefore, for participants in New Zealand, the encounter with the university was also an encounter with a wider and more diverse world than in school. Four of them moved from largely rural areas to the city which made this encounter more significant. Hine showed a globe and a lecture theatre full of people to represent this. All of them to some extent gained access to people in the university that they could not have met in their previous school. Hine valued this as a possibility to widen her perspective of the country, the world and access to a new outlook:

Meeting different students from different countries made me think about going overseas and travelling overseas, which I always wanted to do but, yeah, it's cool, kind of opened my mind and made me think what made up New Zealand and who are New Zealanders, and mine was quite a narrow view and I guess, because every person that I met from a different place had a complete different opinion or perspective of something. (Hine)

For Ruby, social diversity in the university helped her to reinforce her bond with her residential suburb and former low decile school. She discovered both the value of her previous experience and her effort to surpass significant barriers to reach university studies:

Everyone seems to be shocked when I tell them that 33 people from my year have babies and they are only 20. They haven't been lucky to have the experience I had at school though. This one here, I did learn a lot in [...] college which may not benefit me to write essays and stuff but it gave me life experience. (Ruby)

Thanks in part to this diversity; the university was represented for some (Evie and Amelia) as a welcoming space in which the isolation and exclusion that some of them suffered during school were overcome. Hine described how she used her background to teach other students coming from a different life experience:

Yes, one of my best friends, Emma [...] I went to her house and did the garden for her because she didn't know anything about gardening because she was raised in

Leicester in England. They live in a building, where everything is concrete and I couldn't understand this at all, like I grow up on a farm, how you wouldn't know to look after plants?

Interacting with people from diverse backgrounds also facilitated an open disposition to relating with different people, as Grace exemplified:

I try to work with different people because you get different perspectives of things and it challenges you, people may have a greater knowledge than me and I might say something that challenges them. I like learning of other people like that, because it makes sense to you... ok, I would have never thought about that, they expand my thinking. (Grace)

Diversity also opened up the opportunity to obtain support from older people and people who had higher levels of cultural capital. Ruby, who struggled during first year with academic demands, found significant support from other students coming from foundation courses or high decile schools, even stronger than the lecture support:

My mate [...] has been a huge help...the one who dropped out, she was helpful!
When I need help me to make references or whatever. (Ruby)

However, the main aspect that chronotopes at the university showed was the encounter with Māori culture at the university. Teaching programmes in New Zealand incorporate cultural awareness as an important concern (see for example Faculty of Education, 2014), particularly in relation to teaching and Māori-Pacific cultures. The emphasis that different universities gave to cultural matters was not the same, but this was an element valued by all participants coming from the four universities included in this study. The value given to this approach related to several factors. The presence of Māori culture was seen also in the curriculum, the architecture (some faculties had their own Marae or ceremonial meeting house) and the institutional ceremonies, such as welcoming ("Powhiri" in Māori) and farewells. To some extent, the cultural approach that is included in these programmes framed their positive perception about diversity in general (not only in relation to ethnicity).

For those participants coming from locations with a high Māori population, the Māori presence in university represented an opportunity to re-examine and value the Māori culture in their former schools or original towns. There were two participants with one Māori parent (Hine and Grace). They both set themselves apart from other Māori children in school to some extent because they thought that they were too disruptive. Staying away from them was perceived as a way to adapt to the dominant school culture and achieve academic goals.

For both of these participants (Hine and Grace), university was the opportunity to reinforce their cultural belonging and projecting it to the future through their teaching role. Thus, they overcame the uprooting from their culture that they had experienced at school. Hine discovered during university that she wanted to get involved more closely with Māori culture and she chose to prepare herself to teach in Māori rural schools like her old school. She appreciated the emphasis her programme gave to cultural differences and she considered it the programme in New Zealand in which this area of teaching is most important. She had been meeting with a Māori friend who studied in a Māori school from whom she learnt customs and language that she did not know. To some extent, she regretted not having taken the opportunities to be more connected with Māori culture when she was at school. She represented this moment through the image of the “Poutama”, which is a Māori representation of the progressive process of acquiring knowledge which is traditionally displayed in carved “tukutuku”²⁶ panels or woven mats:

So the biggest [...] understanding I gained, was in my second year. I realised what exactly I wanted to do with teaching, like the focus, and that would be going back to rural areas in Northland and teaching in areas that are mostly Māori people, because before that I'd always kind of not interacted with things to do with my own culture. Having teaching lecturers at the university and learning more about Māori education, they kind of gave me a purpose to studying, like more specific, like where I wanted to teach in what decile and things like that. (Hine)

Grace in turn, took Māori teaching as one of her central areas where she reinforced and validated her cultural belonging. In her storyboard, she showed a learning setting where

²⁶ Tukutuku panelling is a traditional latticework used to decorate meeting houses.

she has learned new pedagogies that she expected to apply when teaching Māori students in the future:

This is my Māori paper, this is [...] this a letter but sort of modified, which is what I like, as a teacher myself I would like to use things that make people relate to and modify them to what they need, like using things like, may be bingo!, using this but modifying it so I can use it to teach them Māori, to teach them English, I like that kind of learning. (Grace)

Some participants were Pakeha (people of European descent) who had studied in schools with a significant number of Māori students. The encounter in the university with subjects that related to Māori culture and education was also an opportunity for them to realise that they have had a valuable cross-cultural experience at school. Cultural awareness for them was also understood to be a valuable tool to be applied in education in the future. This made them feel that they had gained an advantage at school, an additional knowledge, in comparison with other students who came from wealthier urban schools. This was significant because in other areas such as writing or reading they had tended to feel behind the students coming from schools with less ethnic diversity.

Reuben for example, who is Pakeha but came from a town with a high number of Māori people, increased his awareness about the relevance of Māori culture for New Zealand identity as a country and for children's development. The Marae was an active presence in his chronotope (See Figures 8.13 and 8.14). He was welcomed by staff members in the Marae, when he started the programme. As an early childhood teacher trainee, he felt then that he was treated as equal with students from primary and secondary teaching, which according to him, is not common in New Zealand. In the Marae he also shared with other students and he participated in a two day workshop about Māori language and culture. While doing his storyboard he took several pictures of the empty place where the Māori Block used to be at his former secondary school. He also included a picture of the Māori House in his school (See Fig 8.20). After his experience in the Graduate Diploma of Teaching he re-discovered the importance of Māori culture to his own culture which he expected to include in his teaching approach in the future:

[My city] has a reasonably high Māori population compared to the rest of the country [...] One of the papers was Maturanga Māori in education as well this year. These lessons brought the value of using Māori language and Māori culture in teaching. From my personal perspective I sort of value something that makes New Zealand unique [...] because no one else in the world has Māori language and culture, so I value teaching children about that [...] I mean I really didn't know that back then, but certainly now, especially with this course. (Reuben)



Fig 8.13: University Marae.
Reuben



Fig 8.14: School Māori house.
Reuben

Ruby and Lily, who were Pakeha students from low decile schools, also realised during their time at university the significance of their multicultural experience at school. They saw the relevance that the topic had to their teaching programmes. The subjects relating to cultural diversity and education also helped some of them to better understand their experience at school and their role as teacher in the future. Amelia for example, said that she had subjects related to Māori culture every single year of her time in the programme. She showed the presence of Māori culture in a transitional milestone, specifically in a picture of the reception, which is the first place she knew at the university and that represented how welcoming and supportive the lecturers were since the beginning. As a daughter of South African parents, she connected the experience with her own experience at a New Zealand school where she felt South African culture was not recognised and valued despite the school having a high number of South African students.

Mabel and Evie found refuge at school among people from other cultures, in a school context in which they experienced high levels of isolation. During these times, through mixing with students from other cultures they avoided the conflict of the predominant school culture. During university, cultural diversity promoted as an institutional approach to education enabled them to confirm the value that different cultural perspectives had for education, as Mabel stated:

This is teaching kind of decolonizing education, kind of Eurocentric nature of the classroom, taken for granted. I think specially if I want to teach English, I think it could be so easy to change that by bringing text that are more relatable, more culturally relevant, not all white authors which is what we all study most of the time, even in this uni, just recognizing the place where people come from. It's something that is a big challenge, but it's something that I want to do. (Mabel)

Mabel, for example, always had a critical approach to education in her school. This was a result of her distance from her family's conservative culture and the school culture. As a consequence, as described in Chapter Seven, she always felt at school that others thought she was a "Freak" and a "Ghost". During school times, she struggled to find her own place and she lived only isolated experiences that helped her to express this approach. For example, outside school she found a radio presenter who helped her to define her political perspective. It was during university when she discovered an environment that helped her to reinforce and unfold her critical perspective. Particular lecturers, from New Zealand and overseas, invited her to question the current structure of society and education. She included in the storyboard one spatial expression of this through the Marae and an event in which different perspectives were put in dialogue:

They took us all into the Marae and we all were sitting round the circle and [they were] all dressed up in the traditional costumes [of] the countries they come from and we spoke about poetry and talking about issues that were important to them and learning to do the dance from Tonga. I think that [went] straight into the issue of the classroom and I think this is what it's about a lot more creativity...that was the most different experience. That was nice. (Mabel)

New Zealand participants showed diverse ways to appropriate the discourse of social and cultural diversity in the university. This discourse gave their cultural origin a new place and a new value. They became part of a new broader imagined community (connected to the country or the world) which enabled them to see their own place of origin from a new perspective. Imagined social capital, according to Young, (1990 as cited in Quinn, 2005) enables people to be open to “an unassimilated otherness” (p.13). According to participants, the main vehicle of this otherness is the presence of Māori and Pacific symbols within the university. This is a sort of otherness that showed the power to frame and strengthen social differences in other contexts, which were not only those that belong to the Māori culture. Students “lived university” (Quinn, 2010) (or some aspects of it) as a polyphonic place in which critical discourses and different experiences of diversity are activated and motivated by the Māori and Pacific voices present in the university space.

Chapter summary

As in Chile, the university space in New Zealand evoked wider social discourses which provided students with a sense of belonging. In Chile these referred to an historical class-based social conflict. In New Zealand, it referred to the difficult encounter between two main cultures in a historically and increasingly culturally diverse country.

In New Zealand, the symbols visible in some parts of the university (appealing to Māori or Pacific cultures) plus some curricular aspects connected participants with some aspects of their own biographies. This helped some of them to redefine the meaning of their educational transition. Participants saw the social diversity of the university as an opportunity to progress and to be opened to the world (breaking free from their former contexts). At the same time, the curricular emphasis on culturally diverse approaches provided them with an opportunity to redefine the bonds with Māori culture (even if they were not Māori) and discovered a new value in that, projecting it to their future teaching role. As Quinn (2010) states; “Memory sustains itself by believing in the existence of possibilities and by vigilantly awaiting them” (Quinn, 2010, p.79). Imagined social capital led participants to redefine their past and imagine the future.

In this context, the Marae was not only the validation of a specific culture within university, it was also the place where early childhood teacher students felt that they were treated as equals to other students, and where diverse cultural perspectives were performed in innovative teaching strategies. The Marae itself was a learning ecology which offered students a place in which the hierarchical western structure was suspended and replaced by a different rituality, sustained in social voices that come from beyond university.

In the case of participants who had been more critical of their secondary schooling, the subjects connected with cultural awareness also related to teaching discourses that promoted processes of decolonisation and strong pedagogical relationships. This is similar to what happened in Chile in which the social discourses that resonated at the university were connected with critical teachers who helped them to better understand Latino American identity and promote decolonisation in pedagogical processes (See participants' quotes earlier in this chapter).

Thus, in both countries the main forms of imagined social capital that first generation university students built were shaped by a mixture of broad social discourses that appealed to oppressed social groups and polyphonic teaching approaches that widened or challenged the mainstream, "formal" ones.

In the next chapter I will make a final comparison between both countries based on a review of the previous chapters. I will deepen the analysis of the main features of imagined social capital and learning ecologies and their relationship with the academic sphere through a discussion which centres on Bakhtin's notion of centrifugal and centripetal forces.

CHAPTER 9:

NARRATIVE POSITIONS AND SUPPORTIVE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Inspired by reproduction theories in education (Baudelot & Establet, 1974; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1964; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and critical theories in education (Freire, 1971; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 1997; McLaren, 1997), I proposed in this study to understand learning transitions as a complex interplay between hegemonic and contra-hegemonic forces that influence educational experiences. These forces act at the same time at the level of the institutional structures and at the level of the student agency. On one side, it was important to analyse educational institutions as structures that reproduce social inequalities, but at the same time, to be aware of their potential to become multicultural spheres (Giroux, 1997) in which diverse students encounter an opportunity to be considered and develop their singular identity. Therefore, my approach is different to contemporary adaptations of Bourdieu's theories (Reay, Clayton, & Crozier, 2009) which try to discover how different "institutional habituses" influence the formation of an "academic learning identity" in working class students that enables them to "fit in" (Reay et al., 2009) in the academic environment. Conversely, I am interested in how students who reject a formal academic identity create distinctive ways to participate in the academic environment and engage in particular relationships and spaces along the way. These forms of engagement, paradoxically, support them to persist in their tertiary studies.

On the other hand, my approach is different to the most important theories of resistance and critical education (Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 1998; McLaren, 1997; Willis, 1976). These underline the power of working class students to create their own culture formations within the school systems and their connections with students' social position. However, resistance theories focus on the analysis of young people's alternative cultures but are less clear when they try to define a new learning approach based on the main aspects of working class cultures. At the same time, their focus on the cultures of resistance lead

these theories to prioritize those students who are at risk of leaving school and reject educational progression and the academic way of learning.

Paul Willis (1976), for example, one of the main representatives of resistance theorists, conceives that working class students react to the unequal social structure, rejecting an academic identity and strengthening the connection with the working class culture. According to Willis, the cultural formations of working class culture at school limited the aspiration of students to achieve other goals that were different to their parents' occupations. On the contrary, this research explores the experience of working class students who have been able to progress within the system, overcoming class and educational barriers along the way. My approach attempts to explore the ways through which the strong identification with the working class culture can be an engine that supports students to engage with the academic field as a way to reinforce their critical position.

I also follow the reproductive theories of education in terms of conceiving social practices as a process at the same time as structural and cognitive. Accordingly, the notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990a; Reay, 2004) was the main conceptual tool that I used to understand the biographical continuities that students build between school and university. However, I do not understand habitus as a perfect homology between institutional structures and student behaviours. As stated in Chapter Four, I consider that habitus creates a bounded domain of possible practices and representation but it does not frame them mechanically. I presented there the distinction between habitus as "incorporation" and habitus as "agency". As Bourdieu (1990a) states, the first notion of habitus refers to the incorporation of social structures in personal dispositions. The second notion of habitus focuses on people's agency to use these dispositions in different ways according to the context (Reay, 2004). In this study I conceive habitus as operationalization (Reay, 2004). In the context of a disconnection between different fields, for example, between academic and non-academic contexts, the habitus can operate as a "principle of improvisation" (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 30-31), making use of different and even contradictory dispositions within certain limits. Thus, the understanding of the kinds of habitus that emerged through the participants' experiences of their schooling provided me with the key elements through which I could understand

the ways that students incorporate social structures, resist them, and propose new social behaviors to transform institutional structures along their transitions.

To distinguish these different and sometimes oppositional forces that influence students' educational transitions I used a dialogical approach to the students' experience. The notions of centrifugal and centripetal forces (Bakhtin, 1973) enable me to understand the complex relations between different discourses that constitute learning ecologies and imagined social capital. These concepts express the attempt of this study to combine the main principles of reproductive and resistance theories in education. Centripetal forces are those that impose one single voice over the polyphonic reality of verbal communication. According to Bakhtin (1981), they work "towards concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization [...] in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization" (p. 62). On the contrary, centrifugal forces push for heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) as a space of polyphonic dialogue through which different voices participate simultaneously, differing from the main voice of power.

In the case of the educational field, centripetal forces are those that conduct the narratives and the norms and rules of the institution (in their hierarchical, class-based, western structure). As Bakhtin states, centripetal forces push for "monoglossia" (Bakhtin, 1981), the imposition of one single authoritative discourse to which all different voices have to be oriented. These forces tend to conduct the discourse towards institutional spaces as the single legitimate way to represent learning experiences. In the educational field, when monoglossia is fully imposed the contribution of alternative discourses about learning is denied and the connection with the student's background is ignored. However, as Bakhtin states, centripetal forces impose certain limits to heteroglossia, "guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding" (p. 271). Therefore, centripetal forces are also essential to facilitate the translation that students do of the new codes of the academic language. In this case, centripetal forces are conducted to enhance the cultural capital of students. They push the narrative to experiences in which participants acquire specific techniques to manage the university system such as dealing with the university services, incorporating study habits or acquiring a certain "corpus" of knowledge of the specific discipline. In the case of this study, centripetal forces never completely silenced the participants' voices. However, some of them tended to frame their learning

experiences within the institutional spaces and discourses or did not include alternative representation of learning connected with their social background.

Centrifugal narratives, in turn, tend to show a dissociated habitus in which the forces of the social spheres and the forces of educational institutions encounter each other without being fused. Centrifugal forces enable participants to create their own forms of social and cultural capital and as a consequence, to connect formal and informal learning spheres. In the case of this study, centrifugal narratives are those that enable students to make their own voice emerge and being visible, they enable participants to define clear learning *ecologies that are different to the academic sphere but can connect with the university environment*. At the institutional level, centrifugal forces show institutional discourses as complex discourses, diverse and sometimes in conflict. Centrifugal forces also open the institution to the context (being influenced by the family, the social context and other institutions) revealing that the pedagogical process cannot be explained only within the boundaries of school and university. Accordingly, at the institutional level the action of centrifugal forces can be reflected on flexible institutional mechanisms capable of responding to diverse students, their different future projections, and their own approaches to learning. In the classroom, centrifugal orientations create dialogical environments in which different voices are heard and teachers create dialogue between formal and vernacular discourses (Van Der Linden & Van Der Linden & Renshaw, 2004).

Therefore, while the data showed that the socially reproducing tendencies were still very strong, there were glimpses of possibilities of transformed patterns and practices. These were seen by the ways participants acquired and transformed learning spaces within the university and used their social and imagined capital to overcome barriers.

In the following section I will describe how centrifugal and centripetal forces operate within different institutional structures and the participants' narratives in each country. Firstly, these narrative positions express the conditions of learning that each system provides in terms of the structures of transition and the educational environment and how responsive they were to students' diversity. Secondly, they express the potential of the different kinds of imagined social capital the participants used to resist monoglossia

and construct alternative learning ecologies in which new forms of approaches to learning became real and possible.

New Zealand: Centrifugal institutions and centripetal narrative positions

Centripetal narratives in New Zealand can be understood primarily as an expression of the power of what Bourdieu called “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This is the medium to which pedagogic action imposes a “cultural arbitrary” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 13) as legitimate, concealing the conditions thus created and imposing its force as the only legitimate approach. My analysis shows that in New Zealand during school most participants confronted the challenge to join a student body in which they were pushed to adapt to dominant behaviors, as a condition of success (see Chapter Seven). This was complemented by a school culture that tended to promote a more individualized approach to learning which, in most cases, makes resistance become isolation.

However, centripetal narratives also show how institutions in New Zealand frame diversity within them so that ideas about difference ultimately become embedded in centrifugal institutional discourses. These institutions offer opportunities for students whose family members do not have academic backgrounds, to find alternative ways to learn and build expectations within the system, that are consistent with their own social background. With regard to the social mixture of schools, the exclusion and isolation that some participants experienced tended to be balanced by a school context which allowed people from different backgrounds to mix. Thus, people from different ethnicities, nationalities or social backgrounds provided participants who were resistant to the school structure a place of identity or refuge (see for examples in Chapter Seven, Mabel, Evie and Amelia).

With regard to pedagogical experiences, the New Zealand participants’ narratives were less focused on stories about normative control than on teaching strategies. This is probably a consequence of the wider range of pedagogies that New Zealand schools promote in comparison with Chile. For example, students are under different structures according to the transitional stage (Year Nine and Year Thirteen) or students are streamed differently according to the support required (for example, see Chapters six

and seven). Thanks to the NCEA system students count with a wide range of flexibility to choose the learning areas in which they felt more comfortable. These different subjects provided them not only credits to support their plans to the future but also learning environments that are consistent with their social background (See Adrian, Chapter Seven). Similarly, the way schools differentiate learning spaces according to different learning settings or rooms enabled participants to feel attached to specific architectures or spaces which represented their specific student identity and interests (see examples in Chapter Seven: Adrian, Amelia and Chloe amongst others).

Some of the New Zealand participants were resistant to the pedagogies they encountered at school (see Chapter Seven: Adrian, Alan, Mabel, Evie or Ruby), but several of them were also exposed to teaching approaches that resonated with their own approaches to learning. The New Zealand cohort valued teachers most when they raised the participants' expectations of themselves or when they used innovative and solid pedagogical approaches (for example, see Chapter Seven: Adrian and Sophie). These participants were aware of the dialogical characteristics of these experiences which differentiated them from more traditional instructive or "academic" teaching activities (see Chapter Seven: Adrian). These experiences were valued because they combined theoretical and experiential learning experiences (see Chapter Seven: Adrian, Mabel and Alan) or because they developed other kinds of skills, such as creative skills or emotional skills (see Chapter Seven: Amelia, Ruby and Evie).

Finally, and looking beyond the schools themselves to the wider educational system, in New Zealand centrifugal orientations also operate at the level of the relation between schools. As it was in Chile, unequal power relations between different school types exist, for example, the differences in prestige between low decile and high decile schools, or between Kura Kaupapa Maori and other schools. However, the experience of participants showed a system in which the quality and prestige of state schools, the continuity between secondary and university assessments, the flexibility in school subject choice and the validation of different learning pathways amongst other factors, made them feel that their place and choices within the system were legitimate and gave them opportunities to progress.

Therefore, the institutions in New Zealand are activated by centrifugal orientations which diversify the possibilities of performing the student role. This is not only visible in the teaching approaches but also in the way the school journey is organized across time and the distribution of students in different learning spaces. Thus, despite the sense of marginalization that some of them felt, the school structure enables “non-academic” working class students to recreate school discourses in their own cultural way, finding the “allegories” they needed in institutional discourses to be recognized in their difference within institutional discourses.

Chile: Centripetal institutions and centrifugal narrative positions

In Chile, on the other hand, participants’ narratives were lived as an on-going rejection of the use of institutional discourses as a way to interpret learning. This suggests that the symbolic violence experienced within Chilean schools failed to incorporate students into school structures. Chilean schools seem less able to accomplish the goal of transforming the habitus produced within the social context to what Bourdieu conceives as a “cultured habitus” (Bourdieu, 1967 as cited in Reay, 2004). Socially homogenous schools limited opportunities for students to access the perspectives and experiences of people outside the each students’ own milieu. High levels of social segregation between schools, which grouped homogeneous student bodies together, reinforced a habitus based on the codes and behaviours of the social group of belonging and create several actions of resistance against the institutional structures. This discourse of resistance was sometimes very subtle (for example, photographs showing socially liminal places such as corridors, corners, or toilets where participants met with friends, (see Chapter Seven: Franco, Rodrigo, Jorge and Julieta amongst others). Sometimes resistance was more explicit (for example, in photographs showing evidence of normative control or poor facilities) (see Chapter seven: Muriel, Rodrigo, Franco and Jorge).

This more distanced kind of positioning was reinforced by centripetal institutional discourses that emphasized normative discourses and the view that all students should be taught similar contents, through similar methodologies and follow similar norms regardless of their differences. Alternative learning experiences were significant for

participants but few of them had experienced this. Similarly, the curriculum offered restricted options and students did not feel that their learning interests were recognized. Moreover, in Chile, schools tend to be more spatially homogenous, specific rooms were associated to a social belonging (class group) rather than to specific learning areas (see Chapter Seven: Rodrigo). As a consequence, clear learning ecologies at school to which they felt emotionally attached are hard to find. They tended to mention particular teachers but they had less of an emotional attachment to the physical environments of their schools.

In Chile, teachers tended to be seen as an extension of these narratives of resistance. The participants valued teachers who used a critical approach and who related well to them or were able to motivate them in ways that fostered a sense of social belonging within the schooling context. Participants also favoured teachers who, unlike the normative approach, recognized them in their singularities, or developed their reflective thinking and were charismatic (see Chapter Seven).

As stated earlier, the Chilean participants responded to schooling contexts with centrifugal narratives that located them in experiences they considered to be more supportive than formal school experiences such as pre-universities, working experiences or alternative university entry programmes. Participants represented these spaces as polyphonic learning experiences that created a very different learning context to the school. These experiences included leadership formation programmes that enhanced their learning and involved them in team work. Other participants got involved with social projects that were consistent with their vocational aspirations (see Chapter Six: Dario). Some participants complemented their academic development by undertaking training programmes conducted to tertiary education (early teaching vocation programmes) aligned with their personal development which increased their confidence and studies habits (see Chapter Six).

Beyond the reality of schools themselves, my analysis shows that the Chilean system had what I call “rough” educational transition structures. This is because participants’ educational pathways were influenced by a wide range of power relations that created

additional barriers for participants in their progression to university, and this increased their sense of social exclusion. In Chile, these forces prioritised private education over state education, scientific-humanistic education over technical education, specific learning areas over others and standardised testing over curricular implementation. These power dynamics restricted the educational progression of first generation students at different stages of their educational transitions and made them feel that their voices and choices were not heard or legitimated within the system.

Thus, centripetal institutional discourses activate centrifugal student's forces. Chilean students re-create their own personal history in the contact with the school environment but reinforcing the non-academic cultural background. At school, they tended to engage with people and places that act as an allegory of their own social belonging. This value is interpreted as an act of resistance to the class based-domination but also as a different sort of teaching and learning which source is the net of relationships and imaginaries that come from their social field.

Therefore, in both countries, the narrative positions that participants took to narrate their school experiences were associated with the structure of the educational system in each country. Centrifugal institutions and smooth transitional systems tend to be associated with centripetal narrative positioning while centripetal institutions and rough transitional systems created the opposite phenomenon. When narrating their university experience, participants unfolded all the potential to make use of or transform the academic environment according to their interests and philosophical positions. However, they tended to persist in the narrative positions they showed when narrating school experiences. School experiences showed emergent elements of imagined social capital and learning ecologies that were developed further once they enrolled at university.

Learning ecologies, imagined social capital and the university as an open community

Despite the differences between the participants' schooling experiences in Chile and New Zealand, in both countries several of the participants experienced some degree of isolation (see Chapter Seven: Mabel, Amelia, Jessica and Victoria) or sense of having been uprooted (see Chapter Seven: Julieta, Jorge, Marcela, Rodrigo, Monica, Muriel,

Alejandra, Carol and Pablo). The university represented an opportunity to find a new sense of place with people who shared similar interests, in institutions they valued or where they could mix with socially diverse people. However, they also felt like outsiders in the large and complex environment in which most of them struggled to manage.

Study ecologies, learning ecologies and imagined social capital were ways through which students create their own learning conditions to progress within the academic environment. In Chapter Eight, I explained the differences between the notions of study and learning ecologies. Both notions express imagined or real learning places which enable participants to be aware of the dialogical condition of learning experiences in which multiple social discourses participate. Both, study ecologies and learning ecologies break with the teacher centered instructive pattern creating new and alternative approaches to learning in which the people involved and the physical surrounding play a valuable and interdependent role. Forming study ecologies were a way of manipulating university places to respond to study demands. Learning ecologies were related to a broader learning function, and provided a way through which students materialized their imagined social capital in specific symbolic or real places, both within university or in the social sphere outside the institution.

The study ecologies that participants built to support their transition during university represented the enactment of the habitus they incorporated during school. In New Zealand, the participants maintained centripetal narrative positions when they represented some of their most valuable learning experiences at the university. For example, throughout Sophie's narrative, she depicted herself as someone who had used all the different resources and institutional networks that the university provided to support her educational progression. This included student advisors, learning support offices, tutors and others. She showed an active disposition, full of emotional connections, in her engagement with staff members and academic spaces. A "key example" of this centripetal orientation is when she described the use of the library and she said that she is a "blue person", referring to the colour of one of the library room (see Chapter Eight). This "positive orientations" to educational institutions also defines her life project. She wanted to be teacher as a way to "remain at school". Other participants emphasised the valuable role played by institutional support programmes such as Student

Learning Support Offices (see Chapters Six and eight: Sophie and Lily). These services provided them with personal support and the confidentiality they needed to express their anxieties about their studies. In some cases, tutors also acted as mediators between lecturers who sometimes seemed too distant or “academic” to be approachable. Some tutors were still employed at school which enabled them to connect the theoretical content with their school teaching experience (see Chapters Six and Eight: Grace, Hine and Amelia). In the same vein, some of the participants represented their private or personal places (room or home) as an extension of the institution, for example, when they chose places in the bedrooms or in their homes as places to study (see Chapter Eight: Hine and Lily).

Therefore, study ecologies in New Zealand emerged within the social and physical boundaries of institutional formal study places. When participants represented themselves as being unengaged with the university, most showed a “narrative of contestation” critical to the educational environment, but they did not develop alternative learning or study ecologies in which they recognise themselves. In these cases, some New Zealand participants (Alan and Evie) did not show any pictures of the university at all or showed pictures that indicated a sense of avoidance, for example, photographs showing exit points or the way out of the university (Ruby). From the twelve people interviewed in New Zealand, only one (during the interview about schooling) included photographs from outside institutions, which define a clearly different learning ecology connected to her family background. Hine showed pictures of their family and house which represent a sort of wisdom connected to farming activities and inherited from his father (see Chapter Seven: Hine).

In other cases the participants defined their own learning ecologies by re-creating formal learning places. The habitus incorporated in New Zealand that emphasizes an individualized narrative position is expressed in personal, “emotional” and structured learning ecologies at university (mainly based on the library). Students situated some of their most valuable learning experiences in depictions of personal routines and moments of study which supported them to “control” a new environment. These are study ecologies where they felt they could control their own time. The possibility to be focused on themselves led them to experience the “joy” of learning (see Chapter Eight: Sophie,

Lily, Grace, Hine and Jessica). Similar to school, the university institution, offered them diverse spaces that facilitated them to create their own study ecologies, such as different rooms at the library each one with their own colour and function (see Chapter Seven: Sophie).

Similarly, study ecologies in Chile also showed the persistence of the habitus incorporated during school. Students tended to build “social” study ecologies which connect sociability with individual study. Similarly to what happened in school, the Chilean participants tried to avoid normative environments. For example, they used random classrooms to study in groups instead of “suffering” the control of staff members at the library (see Chapter Eight: Muriel). This also led students to use centrifugal study ecologies outside formal spaces, such as cafeterias (see Chapter Eight: Alejandra) or gardens (see Chapter Eight: Marcela and Rodrigo). At the same time, some participants’ narratives suggested contestation or disengagement with academic pursuits through a counter-academic discourse. This was also a way to reinforce the bonds amongst the student body that they turned “against” the institution. In this context, they made use of specific forms of social capital available at the faculty. These were expressed through their connectedness with working class people who acted as a bridge between them and the institution, such as librarians (see Chapter Eight: Alejandra, Dario and Pablo) or photocopier assistants (see Chapter Eight: Alejandra and Marcela). These people played an important role in supporting them at crucial moments during their studies, particularly in responding to reading tasks (see Chapters seven and Eight).

Beyond that, participants in both countries created their own forms of imagined social capital and learning ecologies connected to them. Through the identification of different forms of imagined social capital is it possible to distinguish “how different social discourses interact in the classroom” (Balleinger, 1997 as cited in Van Der Linden & Renshaw, 2004). Participants discovered university-specific “institutional narratives” which involved them in new symbolic social networks. In both countries, their institutional landscapes connected them with wider social issues that went beyond university studies; in Chile this was related to social class identity while in New Zealand cultural identities and diversity were evoked.

For the Chilean participants, several symbols in the university environment evoked a history of social struggle and sometimes of political conflict, and being at university was a way to become part of that history. These institutional narratives helped some of them to read their own biography as part of their social group, reinforcing the “social meaning” (see for example Chapter eight: Dario) of their role as teachers in the future. Participants showed “strong” centrifugal narratives in which they represented the academic environment as only one expression of their main approach to learning. For example, Dario and Monica found the main scenarios of their most valuable learning experiences in social sites such as their suburb (see Chapter eight: Dario) or their political community (see Chapter Eight: Monica). These referents were reframed after living the university experience. They were reinforced and represented as both a point of origin and destiny of their narrative. These narratives were also evidence of the participation of diverse groups of people (see Chapter Eight: Monica) during their learning progression, the inclusion of landscapes as symbols of their educational progression (see Chapter Eight: Dario) create well delineated learning ecologies which connected academic and non-academic environments.

Several other participants in Chile participated in community projects (Dario, Franco and Alejandra) as an expression of their commitment to social causes and they defined new career interests as being driven by the desire to support poor communities (Dario) or to promote social transformation (Monica). They also created new learning ecologies within the university but as an aside from the formal ones in which the educational movements, the dialogue, debates or protests acted as motivating learning experiences (see Chapter Eight: Monica, Alejandra, Franco and Jorge).

In New Zealand, the university was seen as an opportunity to open up the participants’ social relationships in a more diverse social environment. This was expressed in several ways; for example, some valued the encounter with people from other social backgrounds or age groups. However, this openness to cultural diversity was mainly expressed through the symbols visible in the university landscapes that were clearly related to Māori and Pacific cultures and in academic subjects that related to cultural awareness. Similarly to the situation in Chile, these symbols and discourses motivated the participants to think about their own position in New Zealand society. At university, the participants of Māori descent discovered an opportunity to find out more about their

cultural heritage (see Chapter Eight: Hine and Grace). On the other hand, some of the Pakeha (European) participants discovered their biographical relationships with the Māori world and the place of Māori culture in New Zealand culture (see Chapter Eight: Adrian and Mabel). The Marae also helped Mabel to think in new ways about the role of ethnic diversity as a place of refuge at school (see Chapter Seven) and as a place where pedagogical approaches could be broadened (see Chapter Eight). Similarly to Chile, these connections with cultural diversity helped the New Zealand participants to review their own biography and provide a new meaning to their future careers (see Chapter Eight: Hine, Grace and Adrian).

They undertook this process accompanied by others. Amongst these others there were peers but also lecturers who allowed them to reframe institutional narratives and use them for their own teaching purposes. Thus, in both countries, first generation university students encountered lecturers and staff members that became part of their imagined social capital and reinforced it. In both countries, first generation students valued diverse teaching approaches, particularly those that promote reflective, critical and practical practices. Mainly in Chile but also in New Zealand, several lecturers became part of these institutional narratives. They increased the participants' knowledge about their social identity and the historical origins of social conflicts (see Chapter Eight: Marcela, Alejandra, Franco, Jorge among others) or they taught subjects that provided a unique perspective on cultural awareness issues (see Chapter Eight: Hine, Mabel and Amelia).

As stated earlier, according to Matusov (2009), dialogical learning is not something to promote but something to be discovered because all learning is dialogical. Thus, learning ecologies exist when students are aware that within the experience of learning, different voices and peoples may participate collaboratively. The findings of this study suggest that these voices were not only related to people. Learning ecologies created learning experiences in which the experience of time, space, and relationships became interdependent.

When participants in this study chose to include these study and learning ecologies during the research interview they were aware of their value for their own personal and

professional formation. They were aware that these learning ecologies worked as an alternative “source of knowledge” dependant on their own social contexts or perspective of learning, although they were also connected to the formal academic environment.

Participants did not situate themselves as passive learners but as active learners who created their own learning conditions within the context of their studies. For example, students recognised the value of studying with peers when they described the collective process they undertook to ‘learn how to study’ in the new academic environment (see Chapter Eight: Dario) or their political community (see Chapter Eight: Monica, Alejandra and Dario). They were aware of the significance of the physical environment and this was evident when they commented on the importance of elements such as greenness, silence and privacy (see Chapter Eight: Sophie and Lily) or where they created study sites in which academic and social places were not merged but strategically connected (see Chapter eight: Alejandra). These learning conditions include being able to choose who they would study with (i.e. their relationships with peers or with academic staff) (see Chapter Eight: Alejandra and Ruby) and how they related with time (i.e. personal or social timing rather than institutional timing) (see Chapter Eight: Alejandra, Marcela, Lily or Sophie).

Thus, in both Chile and New Zealand, the study and learning ecologies that the participants produced were a product of the habitus they had acquired through their educational journeys. This habitus is expressed through centrifugal or centripetal narrative positions depending on the context. Their habitus produced a repertoire of possible choices in the academic environment. The New Zealand participants preferred to represent learning experiences from a centripetal narrative position and usually chose to act centripetally. On the other hand, Chilean students preferred to represent their learning experiences from a centrifugal narrative position and acted centrifugally. However, through building these studies and learning ecologies they “operationalized” (Reay, 2004, p. 440) their habitus in diverse, creative and sometimes personal ways which transformed and re-created the conditions put in place by the academic structure. The identification of these particular ways of operating the school habitus in the university is essential in understanding the most meaningful and supportive elements that first generation university students found while they were in the university.

Imagined social capital in turn, played a more active role in opening students up to the possibilities of creating symbolic connections between the university and external referents. Imagined social capital supported these students to find an opportunity to break the “cloister spaces of reflection” (Quinn, 2005, p. 6) to which schools were restricted. As Quinn states (2005), through imagined social capital, university is no longer represented as an enclosed academic community but as a symbolic network that enables students to create new social connections and “dream[ing] new possibilities” (p. 15). In this study, imagined social capital offered participants the opportunity to recreate social connections with places of belonging that were meaningful for them. These became places where the participants could begin to see themselves as part of a multi-cultural imagined community (mostly in the case of New Zealand) or, in the case of Chile, as part of an imagined social class community.

However, these imaginaries or real connections took this specific shape because it was the university that provided them with these particular features. Only within the university they became symbols that made sense both to the academic system and to the social referents they evoked. Teaching discourses and other symbolic aspects of the university became embedded within the students’ institutional identities and simultaneously became the mirror which connected the participants with a new representation of their social belonging. Participants then were able to engage in “re-imagining the self with and through others, without being absorbed or assimilated” (Quinn, 2005, p. 13), neither for the ‘academic culture’ nor for their social belonging as a site of contestation only.

However, there were significant differences in the material conditions of the educational tertiary systems in both countries in the way the participants produced and enacted their imagined social capital. In New Zealand, the participants valued a broad notion of “cultural awareness”. Consistent with their individual and institutional narrative positions, they understood cultural relationships as a topic that is framed by academia and their roles as future teachers. They did not, however, talk about the connections between these experiences and the social conflicts related to ethnicity in New Zealand.

On the other hand, in Chile, socio-educative segregation at school reinforced the participants' sense of belonging with their own, relatively homogeneous group. On one side, the participants' imagined social capital allowed them to connect the university with other social and geographical sites and this widened sense of social belonging. This is what happened to Dario, for example, when he made associations between the social class referents of the university with his suburb, pre-university institutions and even the church (see Chapter Eight). Imagined social capital also increased the participants' awareness of social injustice which led most of them to other activists in their resistance against educational inequalities.

In other cases, however, imagined social capital, rather than opening up their horizons to new social relations became something of a "trap" (Quinn, 2010, p. 78) which "exacerbate[d] differences in a damaging way" (Quinn, 2005, p. 14). For example, the participants' discourse against hegemonic power and their solidarity with other working class students underpinned their counter-academic discourse. This influenced students' sense of resistance to academic subjects that were considered too abstract and not connected with "real life" (Latin or Logic for example, see Chapter Eight: Monica and Franco). According to participants this discourse also led some peers to discriminate against people from higher social backgrounds or to hide their middle class background to look as working class as possible in front of others. The word used by Alejandra to describe that is quite graphic; *Abajismo* in Spanish, from "abajo" (down). "Abajismo" is to conceal your middle class origin and to present yourself as working class people in front of others. This is a discourse that can deny differences, in which everyone has to identify with only one social class as the only legitimate position and there was evidence of this amongst some of the Chilean participants. The institution itself replicated this logic when lecturers underlined their supposedly "marginal origins" or when awards were not publically shown, to avoid a sense of competition between students. This discourse that denies difference can also restrict people's future aspirations. For example, in talking about their future careers, several participants thought in terms of only one possible line of work; namely, being teachers in low income schools. They saw this kind of aspiration as being something that was determined by external forces that kept working class people in working class situations but at the same time this was also

something they valued themselves. This was markedly different from the situation in New Zealand, where despite some of the participants aspiring to teach at schools in rural, low income or Māori communities (Hine and Grace); they did not see this as an outcome of their own social class origins but rather as a personal commitment to making a change within those communities.

What happened in Chile is reminiscent of Bakhtin's (1986) distinction between secondary speech genres and primary (or simple) speech genres. Secondary speech genres are embedded in institutionalized or normative discourses while primary speech genres emerge from the discourses of daily life. According to Bakhtin when primary genres are influenced by secondary genres, the primary genres tend "to lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others" (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 62). The ideological base of secondary genres tends to constrain the diversity and fragmented reality of the primary ones which are exposed to the dynamic of actual life.

The group interview in Chile illustrated how the participants' discourse progressed from a relatively uniform and shared perspective, to a more diverse and dialogical perspective about their experiences. During the group interview, the students were asked about their experiences of social differences within their institutions. The dialogue started as a reaffirmation of their solidarity as members of a shared social class. Lecturers and students from other social classes were represented as distant and alien. However, as the discussion progressed, they started to recognise the value of meeting people from different social class backgrounds. Thus, at the outset of the group interview, they spoke of their lecturers as being outsiders in their worlds, but they later spoke about these perceived differences in more favourable terms. For example, they recognised that certain aspects of their lecturers' experiences, such as, travel to other places, could broaden people's horizons and they accorded a degree of value to this and saw it as a source of motivation. In these instances, they moved beyond the initial discourse and sought opportunities to accord value to a diversity of social backgrounds.

Personal reflections in the final findings

During my professional journey I have been used to a certain kind of common narrative about poverty and marginalization. The history of poverty in Chile tends to situate people in a certain common position when they refer to their biography as part of a social group. Throughout my life and professional experience in research, lecturing and working in socio-educational programmes, I have perceived a connection between these discourses and my own biography. I am not a first generation working class student. However, as a person fully involved in the political conflicts that have impacted my country since I was a child, I was raised listening to the discourses in my family and community about the struggles for social justice that have shaped the image of my world. These narratives have not only shaped a personality deeply connected with the destiny of the poorest people in my country but have inspired me to undertake professional and personal projects throughout my life (I would say now that this has shaped my imagined social capital). As an educational anthropologist I have heard these narratives of personal, family and social struggle for several years and in several social contexts. The echoe of these voices has shaped my representation of working class experiences.

In New Zealand I had to learn how to interpret a very different experience of working class people. During my PhD journey I have lived in a society in which ethnicity tends to be more predominant than social class differences to represent the social features of the country. This is something that hugely influences people`s daily lives, because public policies tend to label people according to their ethnic origin rather than their financial income level.

At the first stage I was surprised about the few references that New Zealand participants made to a collective experience of social exclusion. Contrary to what happens in Chile, there was not an explicit discourse about the obstacles and injustices that working class people suffered and the constant personal, family and collective struggle to overcome these.

As I have stated in my study, in New Zealand the experience of being a working class student used to be felt as a very personal experience which was not clearly connected to broader social conflicts. On the other hand, the ethnic experience emerged as one significant feature to connect social and institutional contexts. Ethnicity in New Zealand is a medium through which Māori descendants and Pākehā also relate to social differences at a national educational level. Similarly, it took me time to distinguish that there were also subtle ways through which New Zealand participants expressed their resistance or the misalignments between them and the institutional structures. As long as the analysis progressed I realised that I had to pay attention to the emotional attachment to specific places or ways through which participants confronted academic demands. The richness of the discourse about emotions was one of the pathways that made me distinguish the autonomous ways through which New Zealand students engaged with the academic field. Although these connections with places were predominantly personal, they showed an experience of social exclusion in which social conflict was not the main point.

This experience made me think about the characteristics of my own society from a new perspective. I became more aware of the discursive strengths and limitations that my class-based society has. The contrast between New Zealand and Chile helped me to be more accurate in distinguishing the tensions and contradictions within the discourse of Chilean participants. I increased my reflexive skills to read behind the apparently univocal social discourse of some participants and see the variations of the discourse. I realised that the discourse against social exclusion in Chilean participants can turn very monoglossic (in Bakhtinian terms, (Bakhtin, 1981)), hiding the complexities and contradictions of social life. I could develop this analysis when I distinguished the form of imagined social capital in Chile and the influence of centripetal narratives. I found that these discourses showed that these participants are well aware of the unequal social structure and its consequences on their daily lives; however, if the discourse becomes so monoglossic (Bakhtin, 1981), it can also have a negative influence, closing opportunities to relate to other social groups and limiting the educational expectations of these students.

As I stated previously, dialogical research, according to Frank (2005), conceives the research observation not only as a report of what is happening in the field, but also when talking with other people about their lives, research instigates changes in their lives. Research opens a space for dialogue in which the researcher and researched influence each other. Thus, reflexivity contributes to research as long as it is an opportunity for the ethnographer to reflect about the social or personal conditioning in the lived act of observation, in the concrete and visible scenario of the conversation with a describable other. These research findings created the opportunity for participants to discover the connections between their own ways to approach learning and their personal and collective identities. At the same time, they impacted on my own notions of social exclusion. I had to open my perception to perceive the experience of social differences in different dimensions to the ones I was used to confronting in Chile. This increased the significance that I gave to the role of social diversity in educational processes and how this impacted on people's lives.

Chapter summary

In Chapter three, I stated that many previous studies about first generation university students do not fully take into account the complexities of their experiences. In this study, two key aspects were used to analyze educational transitions. Firstly, students' memories of the transition across time were central to the analysis. In line with this, the influence of school experiences on the way students engaged with university were explored. Secondly, the notion of educational structures as power structures was examined. Following earlier reproductive theories in education (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1964; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), I argued that the fundamental reason that first generation university students take time to fully engage with the university is that there is a system that marginalizes some forms of knowledge that is held by socially excluded groups while other forms of knowledge that correspond with middle or upper middle class interests are validated.

In this chapter, I reviewed the findings presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The dialogical approach and the concepts of habitus and imagined social capital were applied

in my analysis of students' transitions as experiences situated in the encounter between the educational system and the participants' contexts of belonging. The analysis of narrative positioning enabled me to go beyond standardised criteria to assess the effectiveness of structure of educational transitions. This analysis showed that this effectiveness needs to be seen from a student perspective. Students made their own selection of the main supportive experiences according to the context in which they were situated.

However, the participants' narrative positions were not wholly determined individually. This was mainly a product of the action of school structures to produce student habitus. Thus, it was necessary to disclose the institutional discourses and teaching strategies that influenced narrative positions in each country. Drawing on that analysis, I focused on how school experiences influenced the way that students dealt with the challenges of the university environment through creating their own learning ecologies and imagined social capital. Chapter Eight focused on identifying the polyphonic characteristics of the study and learning ecologies that participants created. I demonstrated that students found unique ways of incorporating key elements of their spatial and temporal relationships when creating their own learning environments. These study and learning ecologies enabled students to maintain spaces of autonomy within the university and at the same time, increased their commitment to academic activities.

The forms of imagined social capital identified in both countries, showed certain similarities. In New Zealand and Chile, participants found new forms of social belonging connected to their social biography at university which gave them confidence to engage with lecturers and in academic activities. However, the socio-educative segregation in Chile limited the potential of this imagined social capital to widen the participants' social networks beyond their own working class communities. This placed constraints on their future career aspirations and options. For New Zealand, the predominantly individualised and institutionalised narrative positioning prevented participants from making connections between their own biography and the wider social and cultural context within New Zealand society.

The analysis of imagined social capital and learning ecologies shows the potential that this group of students have to create their own learning conditions in a new academic environment. However, this creative potential is strongly linked to institutional discourses in each country. This analysis showed that students enter into a dialogue with these institutional discourses in complex ways consistent with the particular social and educational characteristics in each country. Students in New Zealand, influenced by an educational system which prioritises an individualised focus and a wider diversity of educational approaches, valued the encounter with diverse cultural discourses but lost the connection with their own social group, as a historically and economically excluded group. On the contrary, Chilean students, influenced by a socially segregated and normative educational environment, had a clear awareness of their social class belonging and solidarity amongst equals but show difficulties in entering into dialogue with other social perspectives. School and universities played an ambivalent role, through which students' autonomy and transformative potential was reinforced or, in other moments, their particular forms to approach learning were delegitimised. I expect that the knowledge of the process through which participants in this study built their own learning identities can contribute in the future to helping students to develop "identities of empowerment" as opposed to "identities of subordination" (Montecinos, 1995, p. 300) by focusing on the most productive ways that students used to approach learning and how institutional structures facilitate or put barriers to their emergence in their specific academic context. In the next and final chapter I will review the main assumptions of the comparative perspective presented in Chapter two. From this revision I will present the contributions that this research can make to public policies or future research in similar topics in the future.

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS

Contribution to studies about transition

At the beginning of this thesis, I noted that this study had two main goals: firstly, to contribute to knowledge about first generation university students in Chile and New Zealand; and secondly, to analyse data that can be used to support possible transfer of educational experiences between New Zealand and Chile in the future.

With regard to the main goal, the emphasis on learning experience is what differentiates this study from others that research student transitions in education. The studies about transitions have traditionally focused on the learning progression between different educational levels (Brookhart, 1993) or on the transitional milestones that define the change between different life stages, mainly between youth and adulthood (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007; Côte & Bynner, 2008; Du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Lesley & Adamuti-Trache, 2008; Molgat, 2007) and their relation to social structures. While the first studies are restricted to specific disciplines and teaching methodologies, the latter studies focus on students' choices along the transition and the way students perceive their own biography as a life project.

The main focus of this study is not the biographical transition itself, nor specific disciplines or curricular structures. Instead, the study focuses on the subjects and their biography; however, the centre of the analysis is the way participants experience learning along the transition. Therefore, as stated in Chapter Four, the study does not focus on the educational experience as a rational project towards a future goal but as a “pretension” in Husserl and Bourdieu's (2000) terms, that is, as an experience that responds to the logics of the social field in which students are situated. This response is motivated by the present conditions of the social field and is more intuitively perceived rather than rationally calculated.

Moreover, contrary to other approaches to reproduction and resistance (see for example, Willis, 1976) in this case, the analysis is not only restricted to discourse, in terms of

opinions or perceptions. The ideas of learning ecologies and imagined social capital refer to a comprehensive experience, which includes spatial location and the use of it, aesthetics, sensorial experiences, and visual representations. This is consistent with a notion of learning that goes beyond the standardized criteria of transnational tests and learning standards, conceiving learning as a pedagogical process that involves the whole person, and hers or his social locations and social networks.

Thus, the main contribution of this research is to approach the educational experience from a perspective that, although the biographical continuities are emphasized, conceives these continuities as a product of the way students situate their learning experience within different educational spheres rather than merely their choices in key moments in their lives. The narrative and dialogical approaches I used in this thesis make it possible to understand the connections that students themselves build between the different elements that intervene in their biographical learning experiences.

This study also contributes to a new approach to student retention in university. I contested the idea that student success at university relies on full and effective integration into the academic environment (Quinn, 2005, 2010). The idea of integration has been widely used in studies about retention of non-traditional students and is linked to the representation of the university as a community. In fact, the notion of community is broadly used in Tinto's (1997, 1998) theoretical framework which I critiqued in Chapter Three. Similarly, Jocey Quinn's (2005, 2010) notion of imagined social capital opposes the dominant ideas of a "learning community" or an "academic community" as the main instrument to support the integration of new students in the university.

Another concept applied to retention in the university is the notion of Institutional Habitus (Reay, 2010). This concept is useful because it incorporates the analysis of the role of specific institutional discourses and organizational practices on student engagement with their university. However, Reay's main interest is still the way through which students build an academic learning identity (2010) associated with their social identity. On the contrary, I focused on how anti-academic and pro-academic forces are combined, creating a new learning space at the university.

Creating smoother transitions: The need for diversity

With regard to the potential of this study to support transfer of experiences between different countries, the multi-level analysis (from structures to subject perceptions) showed the mutual influence between macro-educational structures and the micro-level of student experiences. The study showed the influence of two macro aspects on students' learning experiences: the social segregation between schools and the structures of transition between schools and universities.

In Chapters One and Two, I stated that the high level of socio-educational segregation between schools is a consequence of the decline of the quality of the public education system and the school choice system in Chile (Elacqua, 2009; Elacqua, Schneider, & Buckley, 2006; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006). The New Zealand system, on the contrary, has a higher level of social mixture thanks to the zoning system and a strong public educational sector. However, the curricular structure is also a factor that influences the levels of social mixture (Dupriez, Dumay, & Vause, 2008). Studies have stated that a comprehensive curriculum and flexible learning options (as in New Zealand) favour social integration whereas early tracking systems and restricted learning options (as in Chile) tend to segregate students and to reproduce the social division of labour (Dupriez et.al., 2008).

This study showed the positive effects of mixing students from different ethnicities, ages and social classes in the same institutions, particularly in New Zealand. The "peer effect" in education has been widely studied. Studying with peers from different social backgrounds has a positive impact on students' outcomes, especially for those coming from low income backgrounds (See, for example, Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2001; Rumberger & Palardy, 2003; Zimmer & Tomma, 2000). This positive effect is not only restricted to academic outcomes; socially mixed institutions have been considered one of the pivotal elements to promote a more cohesive society and to undertake citizenship education (Briebe, 2014).

The narratives in this study showed that contacting students from other backgrounds contributed to reinforcing the integration of first generation students in the academic

environment. Participants in this study received support from classmates from other social classes, ethnicities and ages in critical milestones of their transition which in some cases, helped them achieve better results. Meeting diverse students also opened their minds to new experiences and increased their cultural capital. Beyond that, this research provides clear evidence of the value of mixing institutions to reinforce the specific identity and self-confidence of working class first generation students. When they meet students from other backgrounds they re-discover the value of their own singular experiences, the school where they studied and their families. This led some of them to distinguish their approach to knowledge as a valid perspective and, as a consequence, they felt supported in their persistence and future projections. Therefore, the research provides evidence that centrifugal educational systems, capable of allocating diversity within them, provide better learning environments to this group of students.

Another feature of centrifugal educational systems is that these do not consider educational institutions as isolated units. On the contrary, these systems respond to diverse and complex biographical transitions and as a consequence, focus on institutional networks and continuities between schools and other institutions. This implies schools having stronger connections with tertiary education and the labor field. All of this is clear in New Zealand continuities between the assessment system in school and university, the influence of the career advice system, the working-based education programmes at school and the strong practicum system in teaching university programmes, among others. The findings of this study provided strong evidence of the positive effects of these institutional networks all across the transitions. These serve students to diversify their learning environments, to reach a deep knowledge of their own skills, and to increase their expectations.

The centripetal-centrifugal framework can be a useful tool for public educational policies to design schools and universities capable of responding to diverse students and their different approaches to educational and vocational interests. This thesis indicates that the Chilean school should progress to a more centrifugal system capable of providing better responses to heterogeneous students and patterns of transition. The transfer of experiences between systems should consider the historical and social particularities of different countries and social contexts. Taking this into consideration, the comparison

between these two countries provided clear evidence that a stronger public sector and a centralized selection system have advantages to achieve smoother transitions for all students. The study also shows the advantages of a comprehensive school curriculum and flexible learning pathways. Finally, it shows the value of having diverse learning environments, including workplace learning experiences to support the transition of these students.

Teaching diversity, teaching reflectively

This study does not focus on teachers' and lecturers' performance as an isolated topic. The analysis of teaching is not restricted to the teacher-student interaction. Teachers and lecturers were considered in the analysis as long as they were part of the learning ecologies and imagined social capital that participants shaped. The findings showed that, to a lesser or greater extent, in both countries teachers and mainly lecturers were mostly distant figures. Therefore, certain people or teaching approaches were underlying exceptional experiences that helped them to fill the gap within the institution.

One of the main findings of this study is the significance of non-teacher adults to increase the participants' engagement with the educational environment. Some students have researched on the role of peers as a "surrogate families" (Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005, p.716) for students in the university, who provide a space of interdependent learning and a sense of community. This research widens the idea of a "surrogate families" to adult figures which interact with students in the university field. These people acted as a sort of ally or mediator between them and the institution. These figures represented the opposition to the institution or teacher-lecturers, either because they were opposed to the mainstream approach to teaching or because they came from a working class background. In New Zealand these were mainly tutors, student advisors or the health service; in Chile, librarians and photocopyists played a key role. Some of these people helped participants to recreate their own understanding of the learning and teaching experience within the formal learning sphere. In other cases they perceived that these people supported them considering their specific characteristics as first generation university students. The evidence provided by this study demands institutions to consider

in their planning the important role of these mediator agents to increase the engagement and contribution of working class and first generation students to the academic field.

Another main finding was the role of non-school learning scenarios in which they found different teaching figures who played a significant role in their transition. This can be facilitated by centrifugal educational systems which create strong collaboration programmes between the school and the working field. In New Zealand, as it was said, work-based learning experiences during school are at an advanced level of consolidation. In the context of these experiences (the early childhood field, for example), participants met adult people who related to them in a closer and personal way and who played a key role in recognizing their skills and to motivate them to pursue tertiary studies.

In Chile, the centrifugal orientation of participants' narratives led them to value the teaching methodologies used in pre-university institutions or other community projects, which sometimes were more influential than the school educational provision for their progression to tertiary studies. Alternative programmes to support transitions of historically excluded groups to higher education were also, for some participants, the main milestone in their transition. In Chile, for example, the programmes created to offer students alternative learning pathways to university had activities that integrated them within the university environment. These programmes helped these students to demythologize university and familiarize them with the university environment. Some of them used working class peer tutors. This increased the motivation and commitment of students toward their educational goals, and appeared to be particularly effective when they were connected to a specific field of study in this case, teaching programmes.

All of these out-of-school valued experiences had something in common; they provided participants with higher expectations, a reflective and experiential approach to learning and were associated to a specific field of vocational interest. I mentioned in Chapter Two the work of some authors who suggest that the secondary school level should progress from the current identity with primary procedures and teaching approaches to increasing connections with the tertiary level and the university (Conley, 2007; Hoffman, 2007; Tedesco, 2001). The findings of this research suggest that the secondary school

level should strengthen the connections with these initiatives (working field, university transition programmes) as a way to focus on students' vocational interests at an early stage. Collaborative experiences between schools and tertiary institutions can expand the influence of these learning scenarios and increase the connections with significant teaching figures.

The importance of strengthening the connection between educational and working learning approaches has also been stated as one of the key elements to support students' transitions (OECD, 2000). The findings of this study support the claim that the educational system should overcome the traditional opposition between academic and vocational learning (Higgins, Vaughan, Phillips, & Dalziel, 2008). Their outcomes are aligned with other studies that state that practical and experiential forms of learning, wisely connected with academic contents, increases the autonomy of students and shapes stronger lifelong learner identities (Higgins, et al., 2008).

Finally, the narratives in this study in both countries challenge the role of pedagogical approaches and standardized forms of assessment during secondary school. Traditionally, secondary schools have focused on knowledge transmission approaches whereas universities have stimulated creative and reflective forms of reasoning (Conley, 2007 ; Kember, 2001). In this research, students in New Zealand valued the NCEA system because it facilitated those obtaining credits. However, they also criticized the standardized approach to learning on which this is based. Some of them missed the pedagogical approach they had during the first years of secondary school which stimulated more creative and reflexive teaching methodologies. In Chile, students criticized the formulaic and authoritarian teacher models which, similarly, did not allow opportunities for reflection or did not recognize the value of different perspectives. The use of these methodologies created significant barriers to adjusting to academic demands during the first years of university. In both countries and with extraordinary coincidences, the participants in this study valued teaching approaches that emphasize critical and anti-colonial (multicultural) approaches to education.

Two main principles shape a dialogical epistemology of teaching: answerability and unifinalizability (Cuenca, 2011). The first one refers to the situated and present conditions of communication and as a consequence to the responsibility that each of us has to our actions. The second one refers to an understanding based on a dialogic encounter that does not result in a merging or mixing of two voices. Each voice retains its own unity and open totality, but both are mutually enriched (Bakhtin, 1986). The influence of a standardized test and accountability in education damaged these two principles; teachers no longer have primary responsibility for what occurs in the classroom and the pedagogical outcomes are measured as finalized entities as if they were independent of the subjects that participate in the pedagogic interaction.

In the future, I expect to keep exploring the role of teacher-lecturer performance when students build imagined social capital and learning ecologies. The findings of this study are an invitation to review other ecological approaches to learning that come mainly from educational psychologists. Ecological perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cole, 1996; Lerner, 1991; Lewin, 1951; Rogoff, 2003) and sociocultural and activity theorists (Cole, 1996; Engestrom, 1987, Greeno, 1989; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) have explored the importance of environmental variables in learning experiences. However, they are mainly influenced by constructivist perspectives and they are still based on a restricted focus on teacher and students interactions. I expect to discuss and to contribute to these approaches from a dialogical perspective that conceives the learning and teaching subjects as unfinalized entities. This will help me to develop a more complex approach to the ecological perspectives focused on students' agency and the influence of non-school learning within the school-university environment.

Centrifugal spatial patterns

Finally, another issue that this research underlined as highly influential on students' transitions is the importance of school architectural spaces. There are some learning theories such as "situated learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and "placed based education" (Lippman, 2010) that have underlined the importance of learning spaces to the learning process. These overcome the notion of place as a given condition of learning

and, instead, are interested in the ways through which the environment shapes the learner while at the same time the learner develops skills to influence the environment. This study did not attempt to give conclusive findings about this topic. However, the ecological perspective of the study has created the conditions to observe in detail the influence of spaces on learning processes. The narrative collected in this study shifted the attention from what happened inside the classroom to broader learning spaces and the symbolic value they had when participants built learning ecologies and imagined social capital. Again, The New Zealand system showed a centrifugal spatial pattern characterized by internal diversity and openness to the surrounding areas.

The diverse and learning centered architecture of spaces was highly influential in New Zealand schools, supporting participants' emotional engagement with specific buildings or areas connected with their learning interests. On the contrary, the lack of places associated with specific learning areas and the representation of schools as spaces of control in Chile were one of the aspects identified as problematic for their educational progression. In contrast, green spaces were particularly important as spaces that provided social interaction different to the more structured academic activities. These spaces also provided a distance and autonomy to deal with a complex school environment. The importance of green space is probably influenced by the significant number of first generation students coming from rural or semi-rural areas in both countries. An examination of school spaces as learning ecologies and sites to build imagined social capital reinforced the role that these can play in offering students liminal spaces that can act as bridges between their place of belonging and the institutional spaces. Thus, this research underlines the educative value of school spaces and how they can reinforce either a learning or disciplinary focus for first generation students.

In the next section, I suggest some of the implications of this study for universities, and suggest some ways they can better support transitions of first generation and other non-traditional students to university.

Implications for transitional programmes to the university

The “transformative approach” (Thomas & Quinn, 2007) that guided this study set out to overcome the deficit approach to educational transitions that has been widely used with the aim of understanding how students’ heterogeneity could contribute to institutional development. Prior research reveals how the strategies used by learning support offices are usually dominated by the “academic literacies” or “academic socialization models” (Warren, 2002, p. 87) that tend to focus on supporting students in “generic writing skills” without considering the disciplinary or social context in which the academic provision is situated. This thesis contributes to a shift from this remedial focus on learning support programmes to an “academic developmental approach” (Warren, 2002, p.88) which builds on the cultural resources that students bring to the academic environment.

The findings of this research suggest that learning support needs to be contextualized on the students’ culturally based epistemologies and the issues of power and identity that are involved in their learning experiences in specific academic contexts (Lea & Street, 1998, 2000; Warren, 2002). Participants in this research were quite aware of the social structures within which academic discourses are produced and at the same time recognised the tensions between academic discourses and those that had emerged from their own social backgrounds. Therefore, learning support programmes that are capable of creating a dialogue between student discourses and disciplinary discourses and are aware of the different social and institutional forces that influence the production of these discourses are in a better position to support students. This implies that learning support programmes focus less on the students’ needs and the support they require and more on the meaning they provide to their learning experiences and the social sphere to which they connect the academic content. Imagined social capital then can be the base from which the main student strengths and engaging dispositions to the academic environment are identified. This learning support approach enables academic institutions to reinforce the commitment and academic skills of students as part of their struggle to make their social group or their own approach to learning more visible and influential in the university.

This research also has implications for institutions to review the way they design study spaces and support students when they incorporate study habits. As has been demonstrated in this study, during the first years of university students created their own study ecologies. These were a product of interdependence between institutional structures, the social composition of the institutions and the students' narrative positions. The incorporation of an academic habitus which helped students to deal with the university services and to acquire study habits was strongly influenced by the dispositions towards institutions created at school. Universities have to be aware of this conditioning of student dispositions during high school and seek to create joint programmes with schools to prepare them to use university services and to be involved in new learning demands. In terms of the use of spaces, their actions have to go beyond the provision of good facilities (although this is highly important) and to incorporate the ways students use different spaces and how these spaces serve to build relationships. As this study has shown, the significance of the institutional history and their distinctive social role (expressed in symbolic space features) are factors that can be strongly supportive for these students to progress in their programmes. If this knowledge is ignored, students can struggle to see their own approach to study as a legitimate one. On the contrary, if these forms of spatial appropriation are recognized, it could help diverse students to progress within higher education and complete their chosen academic pathways.

Other areas this study can influence are student teaching methodologies and curricular structures during university. Currently, there is an international trend to create university programmes that favor wide individual options and diverse learning pathways (For example, the Bologna Plan created in Europe and its influence on other continents) (The European Higher Education Area, 2012). As discussed in this thesis, wider choices favour the autonomy of students and the recognition of their learning interests. However, this study underlined how important students found a social approach to study (particularly in Chile) and how this is related to transitional experiences that are lived as a collective process. Through these forms of appropriation and control over places, students demonstrated their agency through creating spaces which enabled them to reconcile their own backgrounds with the academic environment. Universities should be able to promote within students spaces of collective belonging. However, those should not be restricted to instances on the margin of the academic sphere within the "pastoral"

support field (clubs, sport, recreational groups or others). The findings of this study showed that the analytical distinction between social and academic integration are not so effective to understand the students' experience as a comprehensive phenomenon. A social approach to learning and study played a key role in some events of the transitions for first generation students. Social study is not only conceived as a way to access peer support but also as a way to learn from other life experiences, to support future life projects, and to value different perspectives about academic topics.

With this regard, the New Zealand tutoring system is an experience that can be transferred to Chile, considering the particularities of both countries. In New Zealand, tutors are not only conceived to support lecturers in specific matters; they offer a new space of learning, in smaller groups sessions, using active methodologies that promote group work. In lecturing sessions the teaching figures are also more approachable than the main lecture sessions. This is a good example of an institutionalized mediator role between students and lecturers that promotes a social approach to study and has shown effective results to support working class first generation students.

Research limitations

During the research process I confronted the challenge to move between two different cultures. As a student enrolled in a New Zealand university I needed to learn the academic rules and protocols of a different country and a different academic culture. I described in Chapter Five how I had to incorporate new protocols to conduct my writing communication, to approach staff members and to recruit potential participants. I made some mistakes, particularly in the first stage of the process, which created obstacles to the recruiting process and data collection process at particular times of the study.

I also needed to learn a different language, of which I did not fully manage to understand its local expressions. For example, I had not been exposed to the "young people's" style of language in New Zealand universities. Although I managed to follow a conversation easily, I did not achieve the same fluency as in Chile. Perhaps, New Zealand participants felt less confident to talk about their experiences with someone who

had not shared them. These were probably some of the reasons why the New Zealand interviews tended to be shorter than the Chilean ones, providing to some extent less rich data. All these aspects influenced the research process, creating some blind spots during the data collection stage.

I also stated in Chapter Nine how my preconceptions about social class differences impacted and were transformed during the research process. It took me some time to distinguish the differences in the way New Zealand participants interpreted their reality and that probably affected (to some extent) the communicative interaction and the data collection process during the first research interviews.

Beyond my personal involvement, this study applied a longitudinal perspective of student transitions, as seen through the approach was useful to examine the roles that different institutional structures and social spheres play in shaping participants' experiences and show their interdependence. However, this approach prevented me from deepening the analysis into specific educational areas (curricular, methodological, financial, spatial, etc). Therefore, the study did not provide in depth conclusions regarding some of these specific dimensions that might influence participants' educational trajectories. I expect that the findings of this research will provide a knowledge base from which other studies can explore the importance of specific aspects on student transition.

Similarly, this study was based in a small-scale sample involving 24 students from a small number of educational institutions in Chile and New Zealand. The study chose to focus only on first generation university students rather than between different students whose parents had different educational levels. The conclusion of this study suggests that certain characteristics of the participants' perceptions respond to their experience as first generation students. They all perceived that the academic environment was a foreign environment where they experienced particular difficulties fitting in. Most of them valued the differences between their own culture and the academic culture and used their own "cultural resources" to participate in the academic field. However, several findings of this research can apply to other working class students and even all students undertaking tertiary study. Centrifugal institutions offer wider opportunities to

all students. This is also consistent with the idea that university support programmes should not focus on particular groups to avoid strengthening their sense of exclusion. In attempting to build a more precise description of first generation students' experience, further research could use a similar focus, comparing these students with others who have parents with higher educational levels, comparing their main differences and similarities.

Similarly, the findings obtained, in terms of the discourses, places and people involved responded to the particular characteristics of the institutions which took part in the study. I emphasized throughout the thesis that the focus of the research is on students' experiences as a response to their specific context. Consequently, the findings and conclusion provide a guide but cannot be generalised to other institutions and countries. However, a similar theoretical framework and methodology can be applied to other educational contexts enriching the comparative perspective either in other countries or in different institutions within Chile and New Zealand.

Closing remarks

In these closing remarks, I would like to return to the main motivation that guided this research which I presented at the beginning of this thesis. As a Chilean anthropologist, initially focused on culture and youth, I began my involvement in the educational field after the educational movement that emerged in Chile in 2006. This movement, led by secondary school students shook the foundations of the economic and political order that had been imposed since the democratic restoration of 1990. These young students were the ones who benefited from the educational expansion, however, their demands showed that they were well aware of the impact of social inequalities on their daily life as students and their future educational expectations. At the same time, they created a new form of social participation based on horizontal structures and assemblies, contesting the traditional political structures of formal democracy. In this movement there was the germ of a new kind of democracy and a clear discourse against neoliberalism, without the fear of the past, which was the experience of previous older generations. Between 2006 and 2011 this movement progressed led by university students and summoned teachers, parents and diverse social sectors.

I was part of a generation who grew up in the 1990s and even though I was always critical to the political and social order, my decisions and political perspectives were influenced by a market that covered all aspects of social life. It was only after the educational movement that I gained an awareness of the weight of this influence. Certain aspects of society that I had assumed as normal were revealed in their absurdity and injustice. As a consequence, this movement made me go back to my faith in social change and challenged me to make me wish to contribute to social transformation in the coming decades. Through this research, my aim is to contribute to new ways of observing students' experiences, which are focused on their diversity and promote their agency. At the same time, I wish to contribute to an understanding of the influence that institutional structures have on student experiences and to promote the consolidation of institutional mechanisms that provide opportunities for students to develop their learning approaches consistent with who they are and where they came from.

At present, Chile is re-thinking the role of public and private education for the coming decades. A significant educational reform will take place in the next few years. However, how deep this reform will be and how the new structures will effectively contribute to a more equal educational system is something that depends on the people involved in the process. I hope that the voice of participants in this study and the dialogue I had with them throughout this research can contribute to defining this new role. I am confident that this research, together with others, will be a seed to create a new public education system based on autonomous, democratic, multicultural educational institutions responsive to diverse students and focused on developing their citizenship and learning potential.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for students

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Name of the study: Perspectives of learning during the transition from secondary school to university. A comparative study of first generation university students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

Who is the researcher? My name is Antonio Garcia and I am a PhD researcher from the Faculty of Education in Victoria University of Wellington. This research is funded by Victoria University of Wellington and the Advanced Human Capital Programme from the Chilean government.

What are the aims of the study? Students who have no parents with university experience are a significant group worldwide. According to international studies their pathway to university is more challenging than of other students. This research seeks to explore the perspectives of first generation university students, during the transition from secondary school to university. The obtained results seek to improve existing academic programmes oriented to this group of students and develop new public policies to support them to access university and postgraduate study.

Who will participate in the research? This is a comparative study between New Zealand and Chile. All of the students are first generation university students. There will be 12 University participants in each country from second, third or fourth year university. Participants are:

- Student teachers who are in their second, third or fourth year of study in an undergraduate teaching degree programme or enrolled in a Graduate Diploma Teaching programme.
- From families where neither parent has a university degree or has been enrolled in a university degree.

- From families where neither parent gained a professional qualification such as nursing, teaching or engineering through an organization other than university or has been enrolled in this organisation.
- Former students from state schools (deciles 1 to 8) or low fees private schools.
- Under 27 years age.
- Pakeha (European).

If this describes you and if you might be interested in joining this study please read the following information.

What is the stage of the study where I would take part?

Biographical visual recording: You will be invited to take some pictures, at your own time frame, referring to the most valuable or significant learning experiences during your secondary school experience and your first years of university. The researcher will interview you to ask you about the pictures, why they are meaningful, and the reasons why you have chosen to highlight some over others. At that time you will organize the images into a final assembly or storyboard. At this stage, there will be two interviews. Each interview will take approximately 1 ½ hours.

What about my own confidentiality and privacy?

The opinions and images collected during the research will only be published if you sign a consent form. No image which identifies people can be included in publishing events or public documents. Pseudonyms will be used in every publishing event.

How will be kept up to date with findings of the study?

The result of the study will be delivered to all the participants and institutions as an executive summary of the final thesis no later than February, 2014. The final document of the thesis will be published in February, 2014.

At the end of the process you will receive a 25 NZD giftcard as a reward for your participation.

Participation in this study is voluntary and students can withdraw at any stage up until the data analysis phase of the study begins.

If after knowing the details of the research process, you are not interested in participating in this research this will not impact on your student situation in any way.

For more inquiries please refer to;

Antonio Garcia. PhD Student.

antonio.garciaquirola@vuw.ac.nz

PhD First Supervisor

Dr. Joanna Kidman, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Joanna.Kidman@vuw.ac.nz (04 463 5882)

If you have any concerns about this project, please contact Dr. Allison Kirkman, Chair of the VUW Human Ethics committee.

allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz (04 463 5064)

Appendix 2: Consent form university students

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Perspectives of learning during the transition from Secondary School to University. A Comparative study of First generation university students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

PhD Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

To participate in the research

I have been given an explanation of this research and I understand the aims of the project and what is expected of participants.

Y N

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

Y N

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage up until the data analysis phase of the study begins.

Y N

I also understand that the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

Y N

I give permission for using my opinions and some images selected by me during the process of this research in;

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Publication in academic or professional journals | Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Dissemination at academic or professional conferences | Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Deposit of the research paper or thesis in the University Library | Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |

I understand that the images that I provide will be electronically wiped at the end of the project unless I indicate that I would like them return to me (with the exemption of images that I give a written consent to be published).

Y N

I agree to participate in the following activities during the research process, if required.

- a) Visual recording or visual collection of my educational experiences from secondary school to the present time, including two interviews to create and discuss a visual storyboard. (Estimated time: up to eight hours)²⁷.

Y N

Name of the participant

Signature

²⁷ The reason why the group interview is not included in this consent form is because the last participants in New Zealand (seven of them) were not invited to the group interview because they did not live in Wellington.

Appendix 3: Individual interview questions

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Name of the study: Perspectives of Learning during the Transition from Secondary School to University. A Comparative Study of First Generation University Students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

PhD Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

Individual Interview questions

The storyboard creation process will include three interviews; one frame interview two individual interviews to elicit information about students' perceptions about the images that they will use to create the story board. These interviews will be comprised of open and semi-structured questions. Most of the questions especially the most specifics will depend on the way the participants chose to arrange their images. However, there is a set of questions that should be included.

Frame interview:

- Where would you prefer to begin your photo recording about your experience from secondary school to university?
- Would you like to include other elements in your storyboard that are different from the pictures that you have created (e.g., other pictures, short texts or anything else)?

First and second individual interview

- What is the educational level of your parents and what are their occupations?
- In which educational institutions have you studied and why did you select them?

- What have been your working experiences and how they have contributed to your learning?
- Where do you want to be working as a teacher in the future?
- Please show me the pictures that you took and want to include in the storyboard?
- Please tell me why you chose those photos and images?
- Why was it important for you to include these people or places in the pictures?
- Which of these image are the most meaningful for you and why?
- Which sequence do you want to choose to construct your storyboard? Why did you choose this sequence? Do you think it would be possible to choose another sequence and why or why not?
- Which people or places would you have liked to include but couldn't?
- Tell me about those experiences that you couldn't include?
- Which title would you choose for your storyboard?
- What are the three pictures which you consider are most important in this group?
- What are the three most important moments in school and university?
- What are the next steps in the record process? (First interview only)

Appendix 4: Group interview questions

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Name of the study: Perspectives of Learning during the Transition from Secondary School to University. A Comparative Study of First Generation University Students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

The group interview was a discussion between students about the research process and its preliminary results. Before the interview a preliminary analysis of the biographical exploration were made. The interview was focused on collecting the participants' perceptions about this preliminary analysis.

Group Interview questions:

- What new reflection emerges after analyzing the results of the process and the experience of the participants?
- Do you agree with my general analysis of your products? Why yes? Why not?

Appendix 5: Guidelines for photographic recording

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Name of the study: Perspectives of learning during the transition from secondary school to university. A comparative study of first generation university students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

Guidelines for the photographic recording (biographical recording)

- a) You can take pictures inside and outside the school space but the idea is to include only experiences related with your academic activities (family, friends, home-works, sports, conversations, some places that are important for your reflections, etc). Remember that you have to select the most valuable learning experiences since secondary school until the present.

- b) If you want to go to your secondary school to take pictures, the researcher will ask the school principal to sign a consent form to allow you to take pictures inside the school. If you need it, your transport will be funded by the researcher.

- c) Take care not to disturb the people in the school. If somebody asks you about your activities, explain to them clearly that you are taking these pictures in the context of this research.

- d) For ethical reasons (from Victoria University of Wellington ethical committee), you can take pictures of places only. You can use your creativity to take images which represents to people that you consider relevant to be included in the storyboard. You can

include pictures which identify yourself if you previously give your allowance to show those pictures in public instances, through written consent.

e) You can also include collected pictures from the past (personal, familiar or photos in the public domain).

f) You can also include other kind of images; drawing, photos from blogs, webs or reviews, or others that you would want to propose.

g) Remember that when constructing the storyboard you can include recorded sounds or music. You can select some of these before our second interview.

h) Remember that, in this research, what you verbally say about the pictures is more or equally important than the photo content itself. If you cannot obtain the picture in the conditions or the quality that you want, it is not so relevant in this case. All the images are valuable if they refer to something meaningful to you. This includes even the absent pictures, those that you would have liked to take but you could not. We can discuss about these unrecorded experiences too.

Appendix 6: University students' interview questions²⁸

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



Name of the study: Perspectives of learning during the transition from secondary school to university. A comparative study of first generation university students in Chile and New Zealand.

Researcher: Antonio Garcia.

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Joanna Kidman.

University Questionnaire:

My name is Antonio Garcia; I am doing a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington.

Nowadays, first generation students constitute a large part of the enrolled group at the university. Usually, these students have more difficulties to remain at the university and complete their degree. However, there are few studies about them. My research explores the perspectives of learning of first generation university students during their transition from secondary school to university. It is expected that its results can contribute to support these students in their studies until completing their degree.

The research will involve the use of pictures and visual methodologies to explore the most significant experiences along the way. It is a comparative study about students' school-university transition experiences in New Zealand and Chile.

I need to ask you some questions to find out if you might be invited to participate in this research. All the information that you give will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.

1. What is your age?.....

²⁸ This questionnaire was used only in the first stage of the research. When I included other universities in New Zealand to recruit students this was replaced by appendix one.

2. What is your gender (Circle)?

-Male

-Female

3. What is your nationality?

4. What is your ethnicity?

Māori

Pakeha (European)

Pacific

Other

5. What year did you complete your secondary schooling?.....

6. What is the name of your last secondary school?.....

7. Where is this secondary school located (Suburb and City)?.....

8. When did you start your university studies?.....

9. What educational qualification does your mother (or other female caregivers) hold (Mark with an X):

- Left school with no formal qualifications.....

- Left school with School Certificate or NCEA level 1 or equivalent.....

- Left School with University Entrance or NCEA level 3 or equivalent.....

- Gained a technical or trades qualification e.g registered electrician, hairdresser, motor mechanic.....

- Gained a university degree or higher (e.g. Bachelors, Master, etc.).....

- Gained a professional qualification such as nursing, teaching or engineering through an organization other than university.....

- Other please specify.....

- Don't know.....

10. What educational qualification does your father (or other male caregivers) hold (Mark with an X)?:

- Left school with no formal qualifications.....

- Left school with School Certificate or NCEA level 1 or equivalent.....

- Left School with University Entrance or NCEA level 3 or equivalent.....

- Gained a technical or trades qualification e.g. registered electrician, hairdresser, motor mechanic.....

- Gained a university degree or higher (e.g. Bachelors, Master, etc.).....

- Gained a professional qualification such as nursing, teaching or engineering through an organization other than university.....

- Other please specify.....

- Don't know.....

If the answer is "Bachelor degree" or some higher degree, you don't need to answer the following questions.

11. Please tell me if some of your parents (or other caregivers) attended university although they have not completed the degree (Circle the right answer).

Yes-No

12. Please tell me what is your parents' occupation (or other caregivers).

Mother

Father.....

13. Please tell me if any of your siblings attended or is attending university.

Yes-No

14. Are you interested in participating further in this research (Mark with an X)?

Yes.....

No.....

15. If you want to have more information about this research to decide if you will participate please state your:

Name:

Email address:

Cell phone:

Thank you very much for your time!

If you have any enquiry, please refer to; Antonio Garcia;
antonio.garciaquioga@vuw.ac.nz

Appendix 7: Participants' stories: Example of analysis of trajectory and construction of the narrative chronotope

a) Pablo's Trajectory:

Pablo comes from a mining family. He remembers having always had his mother's support to achieve his goals. Her mother was the one who chose his secondary school because she was confident he could progress in his studies. The school was a well-regarded private voucher school which offered modern facilities and the opportunity to prepare students for university. During its first year, the school was still in a very precarious position and operated as a pilot project to prepare people for the university entrance test but this never eventuated. However, in comparison with many other schools, the teachers always showed that they had high expectations for their students and encouraged them to aim high.

During school, he always felt that he liked to learn and that he was recognized by his teachers. During his school years, Pablo participated in the "Army School Band" which was his most significant learning experience. As a member of the school band, he developed his leadership skills and improved his knowledge of musical instruments. In secondary school, he chose the scientific speciality because he loved maths.

Due to financial reasons, he decided not to enrol in a pre-university institution to prepare for the university entrance test. In spite of that, he obtained the best test score amongst his peers. This enabled him to enrol in a Sound Technology Program. He chose "sound technology" as a way of balancing his family's expectations of having a good income level in the future, his passion for music and his skills in maths.

In his third year, he started to feel uncomfortable in the faculty environment, mainly due to the lack of open spaces and the individualistic style of work. He dropped out in year three and applied to a private university. However, he realised that he had to get a student loan in order to enrol so he changed his mind and applied to the teaching programme in a State University; the Teaching University. In this university, after having some misunderstandings with the student financial advisor, he lost the opportunity to

obtain a student allowance and now he is studying with a public loan that he has to pay back after graduating.

At the teaching university he found motivational lecturers and enrolled in subjects he felt that were consistent with his own approach to learning. He also met peers who supported him in his learning process. Currently, he has part-time jobs as a music technician or doing concerts with his band. In the future, he does not know what he will do. One option is to travel, another option is to go teaching perhaps even in his former school or in any public school that supports low income students like him.

Pablo's chronotope: Cycles

Pablo was keen to participate in the interview process and he brought many pictures and even videos of his school and university experiences. He was also interested in what other participants in the study had done. During the interview I felt I was in a fascinating learning session where he taught me his approach to learning.

Pablo described himself as someone always interested in learning. He thinks that every person can be a good teacher because teaching is a way to relate to people. Therefore, learning has an influence that goes far beyond educational institutions. Thus, the most important images shaping his storyboard represented natural landscapes. These natural landscapes defined an ecology that he believes connects him with his childhood life and his learning identity. He used spaces and landscapes to reflect learning as a process of self-development, based on two main elements: introspective reflection and engaging with others in a sense of community.

Academically related places, such as classrooms, institutional symbols or others played a secondary role in Pablo's narrative. He represented secondary school as a place where his former school spaces have disappeared. The rural spaces, connected with trees around the school have been replaced by an imposing new building that contrasts greatly with his small city.

He also shows surrounding urban and natural areas; routes full of memories of solitary walks between the school and the beach, where he used to smoke and "organize his

ideas” or to hang out with his mates playing music. The natural sites of importance to him; the sun, the beach, the climate appeared to be lived in silence according to the nature’s pause. Thus, he showed himself as someone strongly connected with the ecological surroundings which shaped his former city.

The lack of these ecological settings in his university environment, according to him, was the main reason he dropped out from his first university programme. Into that tiny building located in the centre of the city, where every student has their own box to study an instrument, he felt disconnected with people and not very motivated. The programme focused extensively on technique which made him feel exhausted and he finally left the programme before graduating.

The teaching programme, where he is now enrolled, he spoke of as a “going back home” process. This is a very big campus, green with a lot of trees and some small lagoons where different schools are connected. In his faculty there is an atmosphere of camaraderie and trust where students of different ages relate to each other. There, Pablo made a garden and played music with other students in a pleasant environment, drinking tea or “mate” while looking at the seasons passing behind the big window.

b) Sophie’s trajectory

Sophie’s family lives in Wellington, in a suburb on the outskirts of the city. She is the daughter of a bus driver and her mother has worked in office administration and other odd jobs but is currently staying at home. Her mother finished school but her father was educated until the second year of secondary school. Her father always encouraged his children to get a tertiary qualification. Sophie has always felt her parents’ support for her studies “all along the way” and she felt her parents were her “rock”. Her younger brother is doing a certificate in applying technology.

Sophie studied at a state decile eight school in her zone. She always felt that she was less wealthy than other students. However, she loved her school. There she felt really supported during the whole school journey. She was in a special programme to support student transition from primary school, she had some very motivating teachers, she felt supported by other students, and she had the opportunity to teach younger students and

migrants during her senior years. She always took part in several sports activities and in an exciting social environment with her classmates.

She said that she did not work too hard during school. She was happy as long she passed. She chose subjects without thinking of a clear career pathway. She chose English and classics because she liked them, accountancy because it was an opportunity to have a safe income after school, and fashion because it was something she enjoyed as a hobby. During school, she also started to work part time in a restaurant doing cleaning and other tasks which paid her personal expenses but her parents paid her living costs. When she was interviewed she still worked in the restaurant.

She obtained University Entrance level. She finally decided what to study at university just two weeks before enrolling. Her option was to take subjects similar to those she took at school: English (because she knew she liked it) and history (because she loved classics at school). By then she did not know what career pathway to take but she knew that teaching (graduate diploma) was a possible choice. Her first year at university was hard and she received low marks in some essays which was emotionally hard. Different to what happened in school, during university she wanted to have the best marks possible. To achieve these she asked for support at the Student Learning Support Office and thanks to them she has improved her marks significantly since the second year.

When she finished her degree her parents were “over the moon”; however, she did not feel ready to pursue a career and she wanted to stay longer at university. She decided to do a graduate diploma in teaching as a way “to remain at school” which was the environment she most enjoyed; she also wanted to give back to children what she had received at school. During the graduate diploma she has felt that she could connect her certificate and what she has learned from lecturers to a future career. She is currently studying with a student loan. In the future she does not know where she would prefer to teach.

Chronotope: Institutional life

Sophie's chronotope is highly institutionalised. In her storyboard she showed the Student Learning Support Office or the library where she preferred to study. Throughout her narrative she showed herself using all the different resources, social networks and opportunities that school and university provided. She showed an active disposition, full of emotional connections, to engage with staff members and academic places. She was also very active using all the resources available in the system. She emphasized her engagement with lecturers, staff members and other people working in educational institutions. This 'positive' orientation to school defined her life project. She wanted to be teacher as a way to "remain at school".

Her perspective of educational transitions centred on institutional discourses. To organise the interview she brought a diagram with her main ideas. She described her school experience as a "universe" of multiple activities: academic, voluntary or recreational. She defended her principal and she admired several teachers and lecturers. She deepened her description of different teaching strategies used in school and university and in the support she has received from Student Learning Support, Student Union and other services. She was, throughout the narrative, someone who used, received, and attended, but she did not set herself apart to define an alternative learning ecology. Thus, she tended to define herself from rather than *in*, the educational environment. A key example of this is when she described the use of the library and she said that she was a "blue person", referring to the colour of one of the library rooms where people studied alone. Despite this, she recognized that along her educational journey she has confronted hard moments to progress and achieve; all the solutions tended to come from the university. Institutions are the point of origin and destiny of her chronotope.

c) Adrian's trajectory

Adrian's father is a motor-mechanic with an apprenticeship in an unknown institution. His father finished secondary school and his mother reached 6th form. His mother has done customer-service jobs and worked for a long time in a bank where she was promoted to higher positions. Today she is doing the administrative work in the garage where the father works. His older brother is an electrician; he did an apprenticeship at a polytechnic.

Adrian studied in a decile four school in his family zone. He grew up in a town with a large Māori population. He considers that most of the family in his (low income) area do not encourage their kids to go to the university. In fact, his mother never encouraged him to reach university. She always advised him that one can be promoted within a job if you work well, as she did in the bank ("She said to me that if I wanted to work with animals, for example, I can work in basic work like cleaning cages or something and then you can make your way up"). The father didn't give him any advice at all.

His school had a limited number of subjects available because it was small. He felt he was never "that academic" and he chose subjects that prioritised practical learning; he did Japanese, biology, chemistry, and horticultural science. Japanese was the subject he liked most and his teacher was very influential in encouraging him to pursue tertiary studies.

However, when he finished he did not get NCEA to go to university. He chose to study Japanese in a private institution in a city close to Wellington. The institution promoted effective opportunities to work in Japan ("earning good money"). While at the institute, he cross-credited international studies and took papers in environmental studies at the same institute. After that, he transferred to the university after meeting his current partner (they decided to live together and he moved to Wellington). Then he finished his paper in international relations and obtained the degree.

After finishing he could not find a job so he decided to study again for a certificate in animal health (if he had studied for one year he would have been a veterinarian assistant

but he only wanted to study six months to help people run pet shops) in a polytechnic (“I always like to work with animals so I decided to take other qualifications at least so I decided to study something rather than not working”). But he did not find another job. One of his flatmates helped him to find a job in an early childhood centre (“All the staff there was really impressed on me”). One of the people who worked there had studied for the postgraduate diploma and suggested to Adrian that he apply.

Before he started studying for the graduate diploma he worked in a petrol service station and in other places so “I could save money”. He could afford studies thanks to a student loan and student allowance. However, he will lose the allowance when he turns 25. Nowadays things are “harder”, his couple works full time and he has a lot of pressure from his partner to get money. In the future he does not know where he would prefer to teach.

Chronotope: Teaching diversity

Adrian’s chronotope is defined by two main features: his option for practical and experiential forms of learning, and his identity (as a teacher) with the Māori culture.

He described himself as “not that academic” and he provided some philosophical foundation for his preference for this kind of learning. All across the narrative he underlined his experiences, which include practical and experiential teaching as an effective tool to produce learning. From the pictures of the agriculture course, the science settings and the Japanese songs and games in school until the course of art and craft at the university, he always considered that practical learning is what he was searching for as his teaching identity. On the one hand it was a way to interrupt the traditional way of learning and be “refreshed”; on the other hand, it guided his teaching perspective, based on being “in the place of the learner”.

Secondly, he discovered at the university the significance of Māori culture. Elements and images from Māori culture appeared all across the pictures, also in school and university, and paid a central role in his storyboard. He represented in these pictures the relevance of Māori culture for teaching and for the national identity. This is related to his place of origin, an area with a large Māori population. During the first interview, he brought

some pictures of an empty green space in school. This was the place where the “Māori block” was which he described as a “defining feature” of the school space. These pictures are strongly connected with the pictures of “his house” at school which had a Māori name and with several pictures of the Marae at his current university. The Marae is also a place related to transitional rituals of the university and where he felt validated as an early childhood teacher. He closed the storyboard with a picture of the Marae.

According to his own words, the university experience gave him the opportunity to rediscover the significance of the Māori culture in his childhood environment and the importance of a Māori perspective to teach and understand himself as a New Zealander.

d) Dario's trajectory

Dario comes from a marginal suburb in Santiago. His father was a blacksmith and his mother stayed at home. His siblings attended school. His family always supported him in his expectation to study at university although he was told that he had to find his own way of paying for post-secondary studies because the family could not afford that. He remembered wanting to be a teacher since he was at primary school. After finishing primary school, his mother wanted him to enrol at a vocational school. However, she was advised by a teacher to choose a scientific-humanistic school considering his study skills and the desire for Dario to be a teacher. This teacher also gave him a computer when he finished primary school, which was one of the milestones to increase his expectations.

When choosing secondary school, he asked his mother not to enrol him at the most prestigious emblematic school. He was concerned that the excessive academic demands could harm his opportunities in the future, since secondary school marks play an important role in the entrance application system. He also chose this school for the important role that its students played in the educational movement in 2006.

During secondary school he knew about a programme from the University of Santiago called “Early Teaching Vocation”. This programme recruits students from public schools to train them as future leaders and prepare them for access to teaching programmes. If they were approved for the course, they did not need the University Entrance Test score.

The programme also gave them a grant that covered their study fees. This programme familiarised Dario with the university environment and reinforced his desire to be a teacher.

It was only during the last years that he chose to teach Spanish. Dario thought that language teaching was a more effective way to promote reflection and debate among students than other subjects based on more “objective” knowledge, such as history or math.

Despite having the opportunity to avoid the University Entrance Test score, he decided to reach a high score anyway and enrolled at a pre-university institution. This was a pre-university organized by students from the main public university for low income school students (it was almost free) which provided him with a friendly family environment. He finally obtained the required score to enrol in a teaching programme. After obtaining more than 600 points he could obtain a grant to cover his fees and some life expenses.

He felt that coming from an emblematic school has helped him to do well at university, thanks to its high academic demands, the content taught, and the methodologies used, which are similar to those he used during his first years at university. He also felt that his former school (different to other emblematic schools) has a good balance between curriculum content and entrance test preparation which has helped him to achieve well at university.

In the future, he is very committed to teach in poor zones and public schools; otherwise other future projections are working in the same pre-university where he studied and is doing educational projects for children who do not attend school. Currently, he is working as a tutor in the propedeutic programme, another initiative of the university to widen the access of low income students using alternative ways to take the entrance test.

Chronotope: Learning as a social cause

Dario's chronotope is basically shaped by institutional landscapes (building fronts, gates, institutional logos and symbols, etc). These institutional images helped him to define and reinforce the continuities between his different educational experiences. This identity between different educational stages is shaped by one main principle - "social meaning". This is the key aspect that has led him to choose all the institutions through which his learning journey has passed.

The first image that he included in the final movie is his house and neighbourhood, which represents the effort of his people (family and neighbours) to overcome the barriers of poverty and reach higher achievement. It looks like all the other images emerge from this original experience as an expression of the distinctive "social meaning" that his particular school and university has.

He stated that he thinks that in his school, as well as in his current university, students "make the institution", unlike what happens in other educational institutions. During the interview session he showed and read in front of me the full principles statement of the school, underlying "solidarity" as one of the elements that defines his school experience. School time was an experience that taught him the value of tolerance and respect for people from different races, social backgrounds and sexual orientations. At the same time, it was in school that he knew about conflict management, observing his classmates in political debates and confronting them with passion about their different ideas while debating. However, they always came back to playing when the assembly finished.

In the pre-university institution he learnt from tutors and from university students who came from a similar social background to him and who were very motivated to support students in their struggle to overcome their difficulties. In the programme "Early Teaching Vocation" he had the opportunity with other students who came from similar contexts to take important responsibility organizing social events or debating about the role of teachers in society.

When showing his current university, he showed clear symbols of the social feature of the university, like mural paintings or statues in which he mirrored its own history strongly

associated with an expectation of a more equal society and wider opportunities for working class students. One representation of that was a wall painting that was made by the students themselves when he entered in year one as an expression of the opportunities that the university gave to students to appropriate the space. Finally, the student union office is also shown as an example of a place used to create socially inspired initiatives.