Legitimation and critique of inequality: a pragmatic approach

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Abstract: Addressing a pragmatic sociology perspective, this article presents the results of a study carried out in Chile in a context characterized by growing public debate about social inequalities and increasing criticisms from ordinary people. Using a methodology based on a classificatory card game, we seek to understand how people describe society, its hierarchies, and the groups that compose it, as well as the arguments used to justify or criticize inequalities. We analyze the principles and values that organize the representations of Chilean society and focus on the dynamics of class and gender that feed those classifications. This exercise helps show that social critique and legitimation of inequality can operate simultaneously but at different levels.

Key words: inequality, critique, legitimation, pragmatic sociology, injustice.

Resumen: En el marco de una sociología pragmática, este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación llevada a cabo en Chile en un contexto caracterizado por un incremento del debate público acerca de las desigualdades sociales y su crítica de parte de las personas comunes y corrientes. Usando una metodología de juegos de clasificaciones de naipes, buscamos entender cómo las personas describen la sociedad, sus jerarquías, los grupos que la integran y con base en qué argumentos justifican las desigualdades o las critican. Analizamos los principios y valores que ordenan las representaciones de la sociedad chilena, además de centrarnos en las dinámicas de clase y género que alimentan las clasificaciones. Este ejercicio permite mostrar que la crítica social y legitimación de las desigualdades pueden operar simultáneamente, aunque en planos distintos.

Palabras clave: desigualdad, crítica, legitimación, sociología pragmática, injusticia.

Introduction[1]

The stark socioeconomic disparities[2] that characterize Latin American societies are one of their central problems and have been studied by social sciences for the last decade. Less analyzed have been the degrees of legitimation[3] that exist for inequality, as they can represent an important mechanism for its reproduction. In fact, there is a relation between the levels of equality and inequality legitimation; the more egalitarian a society is, the lesser tolerance to inequality; more unequal societies tend to accept and legitimize it (Markowsky, 1988; Chauvel, 2006).

This situation has also been verified by Chilean studies that have demonstrated that the lowest social classes in the social hierarchy do not perceive inequality as markedly as other social sectors (Castillo, 2009). However and in spite of the advances in this field, what occurs in other social classes, where the meritocracy's discourse (Garretón and Cumsille, 2002; Espinoza, 2012; Bonnefoy, 2013) and agential individualism (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2014) have deeply rooted, has not been systematically studied.

On the basis of a novel methodology, which we here define as *pragmatic approximation*, the present research has been undertaken from focal groups that recreate daily-life interactive situations. The article analyzes the practical modalities of grading and classifying common and ordinary people (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1983) in situations of interaction and interchange in an exercise whose goal is to describe society and the groups comprised in it. In order to reach a determinate classification, and criticize or

2 Even if the concept of inequality has a lengthy theoretical trajectory in social sciences and various perspectives, in this article we will use a definition in which social inequality is understood as "the result of an uneven distribution of a society's resources, in the mathematical sense of the expression, among its members" (Bihr and Pfefferkorn, 2008: 9).

3 Even if there is a broad debate on the notion of legitimation, in the present work we take a Weberian standpoint, built on the notion of the legitimacy of domination. Following this author, legitimization is a set of mechanisms that allow stabilizing domination, thereby, they facilitate the acceptance of the social order, based on values shared by a group. See Puga (2013).

legitimize it, the actors have to define and justify the relative value of people in the social hierarchy.

Over the classificatory process, people discuss and produce evaluative judgments of themselves and the other social groups; this allows observing the setting of limits or social barriers between groups. This way, the mechanisms of subjective differentiation that build and legitimize inequality become visible. Then, we postulate that by means of intuitive and reflexive classifications people elaborate, the legitimation or questioning of social inequalities can be studied. We also examine what the importance given by the participants to personal and individual attributions and/or structural factors is in the definition of the subjects' stances regarding the different established categories.

We are particularly interested in the way the structural factors of class and gender unfold[4] in the group dynamic, as well as in the argumentations and the various categories produced by common and ordinary people to describe society, legitimize or criticize its order. Working with interactive techniques allows not only addressing the priority reached by hegemonic discourses that legitimize inequality, but also analyzing the moments and circumstances in which the priority given to these discourses weakens.

To sum up, in this article we intend to broaden the field of study of social inequality in order to include the various processes of legitimation and criticism to inequality. We state that the classification processes show that the neoliberal discourse has been interiorized by a sizeable part of the players; however, the people's biography, experiences and moral orientations make them decline such discourse in complex and diverse manners. Likewise, we conclude that feelings of discomfort lead to the crystallization of moments to criticize and break with the neoliberal consensus.

In the first part, we will make an introduction to the field of research from where we will set off; then, in the second, we will review the research's conceptual and methodological background. The utilized methodology will be described in the third part. In the three following sections, we will expose the research results; in the first place, the principles and values that order the presentations of Chilean society, effort and education as classification criteria. Then we will analyze the legitimation of inequality in terms of

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4 Expression used by Danilo Martuccelli to critically distance from the trends that explain the behaviors of people and groups in a linear manner and from structural factors. The word unfold recognizes the people's capability of providing the social sphere with meaning and the role of quotidian interactions in the definition, legitimation or criticism of social reality (Martuccelli and Lits, 2009).

class and gender dynamics, to close with the main criticisms to inequality present in a number of society sectors, at times of moments of rupture in the games, in view of showing that criticism and legitimation can simultaneously operate, at different levels nevertheless.

The mandate of self-effort and self-improvement

The establishment of a new economic model as of the 1970's has made room for important changes, not only in productive management, labor organization and institutional regulations, but also in the practices and systems of social interaction in everyday life. In the case of Chile, the change of model and its deepening over the next decades has meant a new rationale, not only in the government, but also in individual and social life (Lechner, 2003; Araujo and Martucelli, 2012), propitiating the conversion of the citizen into an economic actor that moves independently from the State.

In this context, inequalities would transform into a stimulus for the largest number of individuals to self-regulate and self-manage their own risks, stirring creativity and competence, which would return to the economy's functional inequalities. This economic pattern is legitimized by a new discourse of capitalism, which has a central feature the representation of subjects conceived as entrepreneurs of the self (Bolstanki and Chiapello, 1999; Foucault, 2006).

In such model, the individuals receive the mandate of building their biographies autonomously, by means of capabilities, personal resources, effort and perseverance, as well as their ability to detect opportunities, of mobilizing social networks (Mayol *et al.*, 2013; Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012) and consuming (Aparicio-Cabrera, 2014).

Together with the persistent structural inequalities (Tilly, 2000), new inequalities emerge, called "dynamical", which refer to the heterogeneity of situations faced by the economic agents in one same category previously considered homogenous. The members of the category of employees, for example, do not face the same sort of situations: some may be unemployed, others may have precarious jobs, while others may locate in underqualified posts, which introduces important differences between vital trajectories (Fitoussi and Rosanvallon, 2010).

This way, structural factors are no longer sufficient to anticipate the trajectories and understand the differences observed among people. The old categories seem to dilute after the presence of dynamical inequalities that explain intra-categorical differences, on the one side; and on the other, the

assimilation of the discourse of effort, perseverance, empowerment and self-control.

In the case of Chile, this discourse of individualistic nature coexists in society not without tensions with other political and social discourses that value equality as a normative principle of justice (Bonnefoy, 2013) and identify the coexistence of various systems of inequality. These discourses verify the responsibility of the State to generate, by means of public policies, conditions for equal opportunities and rights.

At Latin American level, the aforementioned mutations have aroused the interest of the scholars of social stratification, who following several traditions have delved into the problems of measuring the social structure (Filgueira, 2001), changes in socioeconomic composition (Franco *et al.,* 2011) and the characterization of social mobility processes (Espinoza and Núñez, 2014; Espinoza *et al.,* 2013).

In like manner, there has been a revitalization of studies that focus on social identities, and particularly on class (Méndez, 2008), as a way to problematize processes of sociocultural change, result of deep changes in the social structure. There has been especial interest in the study of the so called middle classes, the emergence and differentiation of new sectors and their growing internal heterogeneity (Méndez, 2008; Franco *et al.*, 2011; Barozet and Espinoza, 2009; Ruiz and Boccardo, 2011).

Other researches have demonstrated that the distance between social classes remains —even though welfare and consumption access had heterogeneously improved in all the classes—, as well as the increase of the distance between higher classes and the rest, and also between agrarian and non-agrarian sectors, which means to return to polarization phenomena at the ends of the social structure (Espinoza and Núñez, 2014).

From the standpoint of social mobility, the existence of short-distance mobility is corroborated, this is to say, between contiguous classes, which is accompanied by the keeping of the borders there exist between the categories with greater power and the rest of social categories (Espinoza *et al.,* 2013). There is need, however, to examine those mutations from the subjective analysis of inequalities and their legitimation, an anchoring point of them in Latin American history.

On theory and research methods: the pragmatic turn in the legitimation of inequality

Most researches carried out in this field in Chile and Latin America over the last two decades have focused on the structural dimensions or on the agential

dimensions of subjectivity. Desigualdades Project (2009-2012) —within which the present work is framed— has intended to propitiate an agenda of studies on social stratification that overcomes such dichotomies, one that unfolds a multidimensional approach[5] and that articulates qualitative and quantitative research devices.

In the context of this work, a partial team from the aforementioned project undertook a theoretical revision on the state of play of the legitimation of inequality [6] and witnessed paradoxical results in the light of the 2009 National Survey on Social Stratification (ENES): the interviewees seem to be sharply critical of inequality in Chile, but scantly prone to support the redistributive policies that might amend such inequalities.

The revision of the debate and evidence gathered pointed out that individuals have critical prejudice on inequality, they are capable of giving an account of the current state of play in their societies, in spite of this they do not involve in collective actions tending to revert that situation.

This led the research agenda to the questions about the processes that legitimize inequality, particularly present at the situational or interactionist dimension. As pointed out by Schwalbe *et al.* (2000), from the pragmatic and interactional tradition it is stated that inequality cannot be understood separately from the processes that legitimize it. This way, the legitimation of inequalities, even those that are institutionalized, will depend on face-to-face interaction, because of that, this should be a key dimension to study them.

The present article is a tributary of this turn and is theoretically and methodologically inspired by Boltanski and Thévenot's (1983) researches, especially the study entitled "*Finding one's way in social space: a study based on games*". To do so, we adapted for Chile one methodology based on focal groups designed by these authors and inspired by "pragmatic judgment", together with other theoretical and methodological contributions from the interactionist theory (Beetham, 1991; Schwalbe *et al.*, 2000).

This approach allows understanding how people negotiate, confront or modify classificatory criteria in order to reach consensus in an interactive practice that mirrors the way we make decisions and formulate opinions in daily life.

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5 The dimensions taken into account in the analysis of this project are age, gender, ascription to territories, cultural and social capitals, incomes, occupation, ethnic origin.

6 Fundamentally inspired by Luc Boltanski's visit to Chile in 2011 to Diego Portales University, where the reading of French pragmatic sociology revitalized the understanding of these processes.

Indeed, Boltanski and Thévenot (1983) point out that people have the ability or competence to recognize the actors' social identity and to manipulate the markers of such identity (manifested, for instance, in situations of symbolical confrontation, challenges, etc.). This ability is presented by traditional sociology as one immediate consequence of the socialization process (for instance, a disposition given by class origin) and not as the actor's competence, so the pragmatic judgment tries to understand the construction of social categories in interaction, not from an interpretation of socialization.

In like manner, this approach assumes that the exercise of classifying and categorizing is not made *in abstract*, but in particular situations, where greater contexts concur, such as a determinate social structure or the circulation of public discourses (Cefaï and Terzic, 2012). Interactions are simultaneously situated in a new macro, meso and micro context, and the latter is characterized by face-to-face relations, where categories, rules and principles proper to the social space are ratified or negotiated.

People who participated in this research, as people in everyday life, adapt their criteria anticipating and imagining the possibilities of the other's interpretation and cooperating with the interlocutors in the construction of a common rationality that enables them to collaborate or negotiate according to plausible forms (Remy and Storrie, 1994; Le Breton, 2008).

Participants unfold competences of classification, establishing a relation between individual mental images and public/official group representation processes. In the classification process, individuals resort to binary peers that allow separating "them" from "us". In this context, the contributions from cultural sociology by Michèle Lamont (1992 and 2014) were also fundamental in the characterization of such differentiation processes. This author offers the concept of symbolic and moral limits/borders, which denote an exercise in temporal, physical and symbolic classification that includes and separates people, groups and things.

Summarizing, this project is a tributary of culturalism in social stratification studies influenced by the work of Bourdieu, but also it has been influenced by pragmatic, situational and the American cultural sociology turns. This way, theory and methodology have allowed moving from what socioeconomic inequalities —in their various dimensions—consist of in Chile to the challenge of researching how inequalities legitimize at subjective level and in interactive situations.

The game of classifications as support for discourses on legitimation and social criticism[7]

From this theoretical-methodological referent, a card game was built; in it each card had a photograph and actual information on a man or woman from the Metropolitan Region of Chile. The sample was obtained from the 2009 National Survey on Social Stratification, heeding a criterion of socioeconomic diversity and adhering to strict protocols of personal data protection.

As regards the dynamic of the game, the participants —selected according to social class criteria[8] as a main variable— were organized in mixed trios according to occupational groups. Six games were played, with a total of 36 players[9] (see table 1).[10]

Each trio was given a deck of 62 cards; the task was to classify them collectively, according to the characteristics they considered most relevant, adequate or legitimate (physical image, occupation, income, schooling, age, sex, place of residence, ethnicity, religion and nationality for those non-Chilean). Beyond this general indication, the team did not orient the players on the classification criteria.

The first phase was carried out with three players accompanied by a moderator. Once the cards were classified and the names for each subgroup of cards were established, the participants were asked to point out which card in each stack better represented that group. Eventually, they were asked to refer the distances and social hierarchies between groups (how close or far, above or below they were from one another). The last phase of the game implied joining two trios (six players who in parallel were playing the classification game in two trios) to agree on a classification.

When the game concluded, each player was personally interviewed to explore three spaces: a reflection on the decisions made and the sentiments and reflections the classifications have stirred in the player, the linking of the

7 Details on methodology are available at: http://www.desigualdades.cl/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Mac-Clure-et-al-Metodolog%C3%ADa-juego-de-clasificaciones-mayo-2012.pdf.

8 Operatively, we worked with the notion of social class developed by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992).

9 We opted to have four trios that represented middle class sectors, increasingly relevant in societies such as the Latin American ones: however, for comparison there were a wealthy group and another from the popular sector.

10 This table is at the annex, at the end of the present article (Editors' note).

game with their own biographic experience and finally a reflection on their perception of inequality and injustice in Chilean society. The games, which last for about three hours each, were recorded in video and mean circa 20 hours of footage.

Following the pragmatic approximation described in the previous section, the task configured a situation of permanent interchange over which people should not only decide on the classification criteria and substantiate their proposals, but also defend their viewpoints, overcome disagreements and reach consensuses to fulfill the assignation. From various experiences, the players —of varied ages and resources— had to make a collective in short time in order to classify cards in groups and place them at a social space.

To so, they mobilized cognitive and value frameworks and resorted to experience, proper or someone else's, to support their argumentations. The classification process was crossed by small power exercises on the definition of leaderships and the capacity to influence the others, which made the proposals' sympathy or rejection visible. Also, different emotions were expressed in an environment that in most of the cases was calm and distended. Only in open confrontations was the process hindered, as these produced defective classifications that were solved when the trios were gathered in a single group.[11]

In order to assess the information, an ethnographic perspective with a strong situational analysis was taken, as it pays attention not only to classification results, but also to the very classifying action, to the quality of interactions and the contents of the interchanged argumentations.[12]

Now we present the main results of the research, referring to situations that occurred in the trios. We will notice how the criteria to classify the groups embody the values of the neoliberal ideology which underscore personal merit, entrepreneurial ability and personal effort, as well as the criteria that legitimize social inequalities.

These criteria are shared by the various trios that decide differently according to the participants' gender and socio-occupational background. However, adhering to one of them usually contradicts the very experience of

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11 Once the game concluded, all the participants, especially from the lowest socio-occupational background, recognized that the interactive situation stimulated them to think and reflect on their experience and perceive reality from a different perspective than the usual.

12 In this article, due to space constrains, only some of the games ad interviews whose interactions were especially insightful are presented. However, the final analysis does consider the set of obtained information.

the participants. This way, important findings are the moments of questioning or breaking the consensus about merit and the effort that is produced in the interaction of the participants in the different trios.

In the following section, these results are exposed around three analysis axes, which not only allow giving an account of how people perceive and assess society, but also the mechanisms to legitimize or criticize inequalities.

Principles and values: effort, individual responsibility and education as classification criteria

Over the game, when the participants are producing the classification, most deem effort and personal responsibility important to determine the subject's social position, which gives an account of the prevalence, in Chilean society, of the principle of equal opportunities over that of equal positions as principles of social justice.[13] (Dubet, 2010). These values —heavily interiorized— become a moral principle that differences people intra-categorically and social groups from one another.

From such standpoint, players distinguish industrious people and those who have improved, regarding those who had not taken the opportunities, settling with what they had. For example, both in trio 2, which comprised professors, accountants, technicians and analysts, and trio 5, which comprised independent workers and traders, the players agree that the lack of opportunities in their generation was overcome owing to personal effort, tolerance of failure, values of respect handed down from their parents, and the gradual broadening of educational opportunities.

The effort and sacrifice present in their narrations make them sharply critical to those who having opportunities did not make the effort. Because of that, in normative terms, participants erect a moral border that produces a recurrent separation between "the industrious" and "the neglecting, the lazy ones"; this is to say, those who, according to them, do not have a sense of self-improvement and those who strain themselves to move forward.

Accomplishments made with sacrifice nourish self-esteem, moreover they are considered an undiscussable mechanisms of social mobility. The members of these trios underscore their own entrepreneurial abilities, they are satisfied with what they have attained in spite of their low incomes and appreciate the possibility that their children go to university.

13 Social justice, as a component of justice, is a construction at once moral and political, both individual and collective, on what is just regarding human rights, but also regarding the distribution and redistribution of advantages and resources in society, either material or symbolic.

> Independent worker, 54 years of age: "the limits come from each person's capabilities to make or have ideas to improve".

> House owner, saleswoman, 65 years of age: "The industrious can become technicians or even university graduates with effort".

From the standpoint of value, the members of all the trios difference from one another. On the one side, from those who belong to advantaged social groups that despise people; and on the other, from those who do not manage to improve. For most of the players, the short-distance social and personal mobility they have witnessed in their intergenerational trajectories is basically attributed to personal and familial effort, but also to structural factors associated with the broadening of educational opportunities in recent decades, especially grants and credits.

Their accomplishments deepen and generalize the social consensus on "Where there's a will, there's a way" and validates the belief in the causal relation between effort and benefit. At the same time, the already known criticism to the social assistance from the State for the poorest sectors, which are suspicious of not making the effort, because of such assistance. A member of trio 6, Workers, who holds only basic education points out that:

> Man, 41 years of age, painter, "Where there's a will, there's a way [...] today in Chile you can study, it is not like before, and even if you want, you can be the president [...]. The poor are poor because they don't want to go far".

However, during the games and individual interviews, participants reiteratively refer to the negative effects of unequal opportunities on their own trajectories: dropping out of school, choosing careers that did not match their motivations, access to less prestigious universities which hindered their future professional advancement.

Then, accomplishments are based on personal attributes that counteract the obstacles: perseverance, neither shy away from nor dismay in the face of failures and the capability of surpassing the traces of conflictive familial histories. It is also supported on their capability of protecting themselves and advancing in spite of the experienced discrimination, abuses and lack of recognition.

It is worth pointing out that the demand for effort and responsibility to advance is different according to the participants' socio-occupational background. Most of the players start to classify from the cards that represent people who concentrate all the advantages, which places them with no further discussion into the highest hierarchical position: these cards represent people with higher education levels, they are high-earning executive professionals, have better cultural capital and live in the most prestigious communes.

In this case, accomplishments, quality of life, stability and security are no longer thought of as results of personal effort but of their and their families' privileged position. Players from intermediate positions —professionals, technicians or workers who perform non-manual tasks with more intensity than in independent and manual sectors— attribute morally negative behaviors to these groups' members: attitudes of contempt, insensibility, frivolity, and mistreatment and abuse toward people who are not their class, those whose contributions and abilities are neglected.

This is to say, the players point out that the justice of the procedures is as valuable as or even more than substantive justice[14] in the assessment of the social groups' positions and behaviors (Mac-Clure and Barozet, 2016). As indicated in other studies, they consider that the elites do not know what unemployment is, they do not experience daily setbacks, this way, they embody a sort of fundamental inequality (Fitoussi and Rosanvallon, 2010).

Here a moral border divides the world of privilege without an effort from the world of effort that demands recognition. For example, for trio 5, Independent workers, which comprised two traders and a house owner, with elementary and middle education completed, the incidence of people with more power is noticeable, pointing out the role of employers in situations of injustice and discrimination in Chilean society. For this trio, the large differences are not justified and are associated with abuses of "those successful".

Man, 54 years of age, trader: "now, on one hand, it is just that a person that worked harder, but never a breach from one that earns 200 000 to another who earns 3 million [from 320 to 4850 USD]".

Man, 57 years of age, trader: "it is very little; they are taking advantage. It would be better to be a seasonal worker with a basic seventh [schooling level reached at 11 years] and go to work seasonally [...]. There is a minimum wage, but people do not respect it.

Woman, saleswoman and house owner, 64 years of age: "it's outrageous, I'm not surprised. Most of the time, wealthy people took advantage of the people. [...] Most of high-class people exploit the others, making them work without paying good salaries".

In the group of Workers, one woman stated the following:

House owner, 38 years of age: "high-class people have had all the ease and comfort to be where they are. So they are the opposite of hard-working people. They come with the Marraqueta [a sort of bread] under their arms. Because they already had, their parents had a career, business, everything. They have paid their university, their stuff [...] As if we had different skin, they see us as freaks

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14 The latter refers to what the individuals should receive; while the former specifies the processes according to which goods should be distributed.

The moral criticism to advantaged groups does not mean the mentioned players do not aspire their children move to social positions with better incomes, have a steady job and quality of life. In the same vein, the value given to effort would explain the election of representatives of the groups located at high-social hierarchies.

The participants choose people who in the cards access that superior level due to their capability of personal growth and force; it is the case of a card that represented a Mapuche engineer. While as a contradiction, in the case of the card of a woman vice president of an enterprise, not for its social background but for being a woman, of being strong and have the face of a leader, according to a female player.

Additionally, participants value people who, having experienced an ascending social mobility, do not forget the values received from their parents and remain linked to their origin groups; while they criticize and disparage people who raise, forget their background and become petulant.

The players also considered hard-working people those who perform onerous tasks, or with no possibilities to progress, owing to their poor education. In the face of these groups, a contradictory feeling of empathy —especially by women— and rejection is expressed. Participants are afraid of socially returning to that same level and suspect that probably the poorest sectors abuse the assistance granted by the State. Within this category, following this argumentation, they chose, for instance, a woman who does the laundry for other people, a woman who makes tooth brushes, a seasonal worker, a fair sweeper, or unemployed feminine seasonal workers without a contract as representatives, which according to the participants do make the effort.

Secondly, the other criterion chosen by the participants as a way to structure societies is education, of which players have very high expectations. According to all the trios, education allows leaving poverty, socially and occupationally ascending, accessing culture to be treated as a peer, shortening social distances and establishing links with people in other groups.

Education also represents insurance against unemployment and precarious labor situations. In pursuit of education, every sacrifice is acceptable. However, a crack is observed in the valuation and expectation when players recognize that education is not the same in private and public schools, and that it does not secure sufficient support to avoid the risk of "returning".

For trios three and four, which comprised secretaries, technicians and salespeople, education is a decisive factor in socio-occupational positioning;

while, low educational level is a barrier to advance in life and a reason for discrimination. In these trios, insufficient family income or familial crises forced them to drop out of school and resigned to enter a technical lyceum or less prestigious private universities.

Albeit, for the members of those trios, education is double-edged: it enables upward social mobility for those who access it, but leaves the rest exposed to exploitation, discrimination and neglect.

> Man, 40 years of age, health advisor: "we're doomed, if you apply for anything or lately have applied for a job, what's your age? What course you reached? Erm... eighth [level reached at 12]. You see... we need cleaning personnel over there. [...] And exploit the person, because you don't have the capacity to complain, because if you say: "hey you're paying me 150 and I spend 100 in 'locomotion', because in some parts you dot get anything for transport. Then, look somewhere else, don't get cocky, here we're not to entertain employees. If it is so, education is a step, I believe that it is the most important, because it may be the dullest cat [guy] with the best education, but you're schooled and doors open for you. With no education, no door opens. It is so, unfortunately".

This way, education as criterion to classify the cards in the game is only considered to difference between the highest tiers of a social scale. With various denominations, the players separate senior from intermediate professionals, and then technicians. Under technician level, education ceases to be a factor considered in the classifications, since people began to be defined by the trades they perform, the characteristics of labor relationships and frequently by the psychosocial characteristics they are attributed (for example, lack of perseverance, being neglectful or conformists).

A low educational level is a restrictive factor in life, not only because lacking studies constrains opportunities, but also because the skills acquired by means of experience which are not certified with diplomas are overlooked and sometimes appropriated by professionals in superior hierarchies, devaluing and restricting the autonomy of the rest of the workers.

Class and gender unfolding in classificatory processes

The logic of effort, even if shared by most of the players, is interiorized and lived differently according to class and gender: biographic experience and normative orientations influence the way players signify classificatory processes and the intensity of emotions and sentiments stirred by social differences and distances.

As regards social class, trio 1, which comprised successful professionals, finds it easy to understand the task, abstract and substantiate the classification

criteria. Its members also establish promptly the explicit regulations for their functioning, which allows them to easily move from collective to individual work and manage the different opinions.

They start classifying from the upper sectors and they identify with the upper tiers of the constructed hierarchy, only differencing from the upper classes with greater power, which concentrate all the material and symbolical advantages. By comparison with them, the participants of the rest of the trios find it hard to abstract more general criteria; on the contrary, they resort to other people's or personal experience and in their argumentations usually interpret the provided information in a more projective manner, valuing and attributing the presented people in the cards psychologic features and a life trajectory.

The topic of social conflict, the defense of the own interests, the no-recognition, disrespect, as well as authoritarianism as a part of the reflection on social classes turn into discussion in all the trios, except for the one from privileged sectors. These trios introduce new topics into the debate such as low salaries, poverty, and the presence of migrants in the country.

> Man, 57 years of age, independent trader: "there are firms in which there are no benefits. I won't give you that, if you like that's fine, if you don't like it… they do so. You know, what happens is that people to keep their job have to put up with, they don't have another job and they won't be fooling around".

> Woman, 64 years of age, catalogue saleswoman and house owner: "what happens is that for the advisers the thing of the Peruvians has been terrible, because those girls, as they don't have a home they don't have anything to eat, then they can [accept very low salaries]. They'll have something to eat, they'll have their own food, shelter, but of course it's cheeky, a terrible waste".

Players express the discrimination experienced and the feelings related; they openly express the discomfort, feelings of injustice, insecurity, and mainly fear of losing their advancement. These feelings deepen with the perception of the insurmountable distance that separates them from the groups that concentrate all the advantages and opportunities, which unlike them, allow them to enjoy stability and certainty in their lives.

For its part, belonging to a gender intersects with social background. Both dimensions are present along the game, in the group dynamic and alliances, in the visibility given to women and the recognition of the particular nature of the work involved in homemaking. However, belonging to a gender was expressed with greater intensity in the group dynamic than in the chosen classifying criteria.

Most of the women does not take leadership stances in the substantiation process, maintaining their opinions less persistently over the game and frequently tending to conciliate between opposed criteria in order to advance in the assigned task.

By and large, the members of the trio start classifying the cards in which income and occupation are stated and put the cards that represent women with no incomes aside, leaving them together under the entry of homemaker or differenced them according to their education and place of residence. In most of the trios, domestic work and the role of women in their children's education and future projection are evinced.

> Man, 54 years of age: "if it weren't for the women who stay at home, society wouldn't exist".

> Woman, house owner and saleswoman, 64 years of age: "the most devoted because one at home works harder than anyone else […] and without a payment, they depend on the husband".

Albeit, women in particular assert this work's social value and oppose both disqualifications that reduce women without incomes to the category of dependents and the perception that they take advantage of men's work. They also refuse the denominations that mystify or trivialize domestic work. Largely, women in the trios emphasize the consequences of the role assigned to women and the sacrifice implied, which expresses both as economic dependence and the postponement of their personal projects.

In this regard, the male participants, mainly from non-university sectors, have ambiguous stances: on the one side, they recognize the contributions from reproductive work, but also are aware of the possible exploitation of masculine resources by women, mainly in the case of educated ones.

To sum up, class/gender intersection is especially visible in group dynamics. In most of the trios, women's behaviors, expressions and verbal intonations are less self-assertive than those of men; by means of body expressions, smiles and the acceptance of others' opinions, they stimulate the development of the game, release tension and tend to conciliate opposing proposals. The stance taken by women in the game does not favor the emergence and persistence of proper criteria, except for the cases in which masculine participants express negative or pejorative judgments about women.

The weakening of consensuses and the emergence of criticism

Retaking our analysis from a processual standpoint, we can point out that the development of the games for over two hours propitiated a permanent

interchange between the players, who had to substantiate their opinions, negotiate their differences and be capable of reaching partial agreements to advance in the task. Not only does this allow analyzing the contents of the discourse, but also the moments of rupture of agreements and of criticism to the content of the discourse of effort and personal responsibility.

As we have noticed, on the one hand, the trios easily agreed on the importance of personal responsibility and education as drivers of progress and powerful means to adapt to social prescriptions. However, these agreements came into conflict in the face of some critical opinions for the manifest social asymmetries, for instance, in the concentration of privileges in the elite or in the professionals' lack or respect for other groups.

On the other, the reference to personal experiences by the members of the trios brought up shared situations about the obstacles faced because of their social background, the school or university where they studied, being a technician or the neighborhood where they live. These frustrating situations which sometimes made the players relinquish their expectations were lived, as they express, with feelings of exclusion.

At this moment, the participants connected with negative personal experiences, referred to lack of opportunities or disrespect for them by members located at high positions in the social hierarchy, which weakened at least momentarily the adherence to the dominant discourse of effort and individual responsibility.

The ways of distancing from the dominant neoliberal discourse were different by social class. In the case of trio 1, high services, at first the principles of the neoliberal model are followed. The members of this trio use multidimensional criteria to classify the cards according to the residence commune, schooling level, income and prestige; the members separate the cards in four groups hierarchically ordered: gold, silver, copper, lead, inspired by types of bank cards.

In spite of the haste with which the classification is established apparently without dissention between the players, by the end of the exercise some critical reflections appear:

> Female engineer, 32 years of age: "d'you notice wealth? The most abundant are not wealthy".

Then, an older therapist breaks the apparent consensus by calling the proposed classification dehumanized, individualistic and successist. She distances from the promptness with which people were classified, reducing them to a number, a tag, overlooking, she points out, their human condition. On this basis, she proposes new principles to assess people supported on empathy, solidarity and the comprehension of human vulnerability.

Therapist, 51 years of age: "it's like difficult for me to classify so coldly".

Engineer, 31 years of age: "for me it's not because in my job we classify by commune, social class, we look into people's pockets. Someone who has to live in Maipú, even though they are postgraduates, is very different from someone who lives in Las Condes. They're different niches, different is how much they spent, different what they lease. They can have a giant house in Maipúi and a small one in Las Condes.[15] We work with data, we're cold and one gets used to it".

Therapist: [...] "it is difficult for me to be so cold".

Engineer: "It's not cold".

Female engineer, 32 years of age: "you're looking at the other side. In the end, we all are a number, a number of how much you earn, your rank".

Engineer: "and more so in Chile, with a society so classist. Little by little it has transformed. It's the most shameful society in this respect, they measure you by where you study, live, work, how much you earn... classist. When you travel, you are asked a lot of things, because of that Europeans are more open-minded.

Another rupture occurred in the non-professional trios. In trio 3, Non-manual high service routines, the male participant, once the cards were revised, exposes his interpretation of society crossed by power and exploitation relations, and by the confrontation between social groups with antagonistic interests. He states that the most disadvantaged sectors, either from lack of education, age, or peasant origin are objects of discrimination and disrespect. For this participant, there are only three groups: the industrious, professionals devoted to social work and the group of the ones who have the power.

The female participants resist this classification as it reduces human relationships to their dimension of power and oppression. They argue that, according to their experience, not all the professionals behave in a certain manner, they can also be kind people and have values. They give more importance to the people's qualities than their resources, this way, structural social inequalities are not so relevant.

Woman, computer technician, 40 years of age: "I think L [a participant] is so antisystem that he considers that someone moneyed is a bad person. With the other lady we did not agree because it's not always so. He said, if you live in San Bernardo or in La Pintana[16] you won't get the job.

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15   Maipú is a commune in the Metropolitan Region of lower middle class; whereas Las Condes is a high-class commune.

16   Communes with less resources in the periphery of Santiago.

Woman: technical secretary, 39 years of age: "not always people who earn more have university studies. Not all university graduates come from Sector oriente,[17] not everyone in these groups are selfish. [...] I don't see any group far in my everyday life, because I can relate to a person without a degree and with a lawyer. Maybe the first won't speak of laws, but we'll talk about other things, and what I don't know I will pay attention to and ask questions about. Everything is in your mind, I can see the lawyer from afar and say this cat... good manners, it depends on how I approach in every case what allows the person to tread on me. The fact that Mapuche have specific policies demonstrates they are not discriminated".

In trio 4, non-manual low services, which comprised accounting technicians, waitresses and receptionists, from families whose parents had been manual workers, distinguishable is rejection to authoritarianism and the underrating of the expertise acquired through experience, even though it is not certified.

The group dynamic organizes around the contradictory meaning of education, discriminations which the lower social sectors are exposed to, authoritarianism of hierarchies in labor and subordination in labor relations. There is criticism to the no-recognition by professionals that the skills acquired in practice are usually more useful than those acquired at university to exercise certain tasks. To sum up, values such as autonomy, non-dependence on the boss and risk-taking capacity are affirmed; these values, in their discourse, are associated with masculinity. Another woman in trio 4 reinforces this stance:

Woman, 43 years of age, receptionist: "those pampered are neglectful people who aren't capable of stepping forward, while independents are self-confident, can take action and become independent".

In short, in most of the trios, the interiorization of the neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility which conceives subjects as entrepreneurs of the self does not manage to cover the feelings of discomfort experienced by the players over their biographies before the obstacles they face and the discriminations they experienced. At various times during the game, the group dynamic offers possibilities to notice criticism to this discourse.

In such moments, players glimpse new alternatives to interpret social dynamics; among others, the value of the diversity of motivations and life experiences that coexist in the same society. In the face of trajectories oriented by individual success, players propose alternative values: welfare, quality of life, personal fulfillment and the recognition of lifestyle diversity.

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17 Wealth communes in the Metropolitan region.

Conclusion

The exposed results show the interiorization of the discourse and the neoliberal principles in the construction process of differenced social groups as a way to represent society. In these interaction spaces, at least, class and gender inequalities are reproduced. In the acts of naming, defining, and separating, intergroup borders that legitimize inequalities and social distances are established, and also make coexistence in a social space with prefixed places acceptable.

This research shows that the degree of interiorization of the discourse of effort and responsibility is endorsed by the experience of short-distance social mobility, which many have experienced in Chile.

However, the ideology of effort as an explanatory factor of differentiation takes at least to directions. On the one side, players consider that advantaged groups have privileges associated with their background, which secures stability, welfare and security, independently from personal efforts. Thick social and material networks protect them from social and economic vicissitudes.

On the other side, for the players it was impossible to bet on effort in the most disadvantaged groups, which face a myriad of external factors that prevent them from progressing. In this context, consensus becomes fragile when contrasted with each one's life experiences at the time of discussing in the interactive situation.

At different times during the game the adherence to neoliberal values weakens, either from the emergence of discourses that come from different cognitive frameworks or from experiences shared in life. In the debate, on the one side, there were ideas that are associated with the tradition of socialism, which verified the existence of domination and exploitation between social classes; on the other, there were humanist and Christian ideas that underscored the common humanity of human beings, solidarity and empathy for those vulnerable.

In other cases, the discourse of effort and social responsibility could neither give an account of nor justify the painful experiences aroused from various discrimination and disrespect situations, which have been experienced by people when entering new social spaces. They are aware that the places they hold at present do not protect them from uncertainty and the risk of going back, which makes them feel uneasy.

Satisfaction for the efforts made so that their children have better opportunities —which is normally associated with access to university—

makes the feelings of disrespect and frustration bearable. The experience of discomfort, suffering and fears before uncertainty in life can open a space to contest the dominant cultural definitions that justify inequalities (Varikas, 2005).

This way, a line of continuity joins the legitimation of the logic of merit and individual responsibility with the daily experience of uneasiness, facing unequal opportunities, the confirmation of the concentration of advantages by upper social groups, disrespect, and finally, the uncertainty to retain what has been accomplished.

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Annex

Table 1

Trios of participants

Trio according to social class		Description
1	High services and high management	Socioeconomic level (SEL): C1; Education: university graduates, professional technicians; activity: professionals, entrepreneurs, independent professionals with employees; wage: over 3 300 USD
2	Low services and low management	SEL: C2-C3; Education: university graduates and technicians; Activity: professors, accountants, technicians, analysts, etc.; wage: 725 - 1.150 USD
3	High non-manual activities	SEL: C3-D; Education: technicians and people with no higher education; Activity: secretaries, administrative; wage: 415 – 825 USD
4	Low non-manual activities	SEL: C3-D; Education: technicians and people with no higher education; Activity: salespersons, junior employees, waitresses, clerks; wage: 415 - 825 USD
5	Independent	SEL: C3-D; Education: technicians and people with no higher education; activities: small traders, hairdressers, seamstresses, gardeners, non-salaried people in general; wage: 415 – 825 USD
6	Skilled and unskilled manual workers	SEL: D; Education: basic studies or incomplete intermediate studies; activities: workers, domestic maids; wage: 415 to 500 USD

Source: own elaboration.

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