

**Equitable access to higher education in Chile: An analysis of special-access students'
reported experiences at university**

by

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In order to address inequitable access to higher education, the Bachelet government (2014-2018) started a pilot program to provide preparation and access to university to students who have historically been underrepresented at this level. To this date, this and other special-access programs have helped diversify higher education, something for which higher education institutions need to adapt.

In this scenario, and to inform special-access programs, I analyzed the experiences of a sample of special-access students who entered through three special-access programs in one public university in Chile to understand their experiences while navigating higher education. Using a survey, semi-structured interviews, and public documents from the special-access programs selected, this study aimed at answering three main research questions: (1) What are special-access students' main reported experiences in higher education? (2) How do these students represent and evaluate their reported experiences in higher education? (3) How do programs represent and evaluate students?

To answer questions one and two, I analyzed interviews with six participants at two levels respectively, (1) thematic (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2014), and (2) at the discourse level, drawing from Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA (Fairclough, 2003; Leeuwen, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012; T. A. van Dijk, 1993) and Systemic Functional Linguistics, SFL (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin & White, 2005; Oteíza, 2017).

Findings through the thematic analysis show that students challenging experiences by far exceeded positive ones, and within challenges, those relating to (a) academic issues (b) navigating school resources, and (c) mental health, were among the most prevalent ones. Findings from CDA and SFL analysis (using Appraisal and Transitivity Systems) show that university-wide programs and resources materialize very differently depending on the school students enroll. Differences in school resources and level of guidance and support to navigate resources greatly impact how students represent and evaluate their journeys in higher education, impacting the chance these students have of making the most of their university experience. Finally, findings from the document analysis show that programs represent students in meritocratic ways and expect their students to be resilient and emblems of excellence disregarding systemic inequities.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Historical background: Access to higher education in Chile

In Chile, education, and higher education in particular, has suffered major changes since the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990) (Palma, 2013). What was once considered as a right, became a privilege, product of the neoliberal agenda imposed by General Augusto Pinochet. Among the many social reforms that took place during this time, privatization of education deeply impacted access to education; it transferred costs that were once almost entirely covered by the government (80%) to practically entirely to the families. As a result, private universities and institutes flourished, diversifying the offer but also bringing along the competition for allocation of public funds for higher education.

These reforms during the 70's and 80's brought an increase in the total percentage of students accessing higher education. However, students whose families' earnings corresponded to lowest quintiles were still underrepresented (Espinoza, 2008). Thus, after the return to democracy and aiming at tackling these inequities in terms of access, the Aylwin (1990-1994), Frei (1994-2000), and Lagos (2000-2006) governments implemented higher education financing policies, creating new tuition scholarship programs and student loans that were privately funded but with a State guarantee (Palma, 2013).

These reforms, even though aiming at opening higher education for low-income students, left most of those who were able to obtain these benefits in great debt after graduation. These student debts, added to a need for properly regulated quality education and the belief the country should return to the pre-dictatorship conception of education as a right, boosted the secondary

student protests in 2006¹. This was later followed by the university student protests in 2011 that became famous around the world due to their massive manifestations (Long, 2011).

In light of the student movement requests for free quality education, there was a key turning point during the second Bachelet administration (2014-2018); A pilot program was started that would provide free access to higher education to those students who could certify good academic records and financial need. This program that has expanded since its conception in 2014 has joined other university-based programs that have targeted students from different marginalized populations in higher education to open doors for post-secondary education.

1.2 Problem statement

It is certainly a positive outcome that certain institutions have supported increasing diversity on their campuses, allowing otherwise non-college-bound students to access higher education through government and university-based special admission programs. However, to succeed in higher education, students need to acquire the ways of knowing the world accepted and required in academia, i.e., academic literacy². This issue has been simplified by higher education institutions, whose help on the subject has been restricted to providing students with workshops and aid to improve academic skills. This narrowed view of what academic literacy entails contradicts the literature that has defined academic literacy as much more than just academic skills

¹ For more information on this period, please refer to Contreras (2001), Bravo, Contreras & Sanhueza (1999), Palma (2013), Espinoza (2008), among others.

² By academic literacy I mean, following Lea & Street (1998), the ways of understanding, interpreting and organizing knowledge in academic settings.

(Gee & Crawford, 1998; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Lea & Street, 1998; Zavala, 2009) and emphasizes the fact that higher education institutions have the duty to provide students with not only access, but also the ways of understanding this new cultural world of the university and come to terms with these new ways of knowing.

In this scenario, this study aims at exploring the experiences of a group of special-access students in one public university in Chile, analyze what special issues they might confront while navigating higher education, how these issues have affected them, and whether they are provided with the resources to overcome them. Because I aim at looking at different factors in students' lives while at university, it is important to mention that I am conceiving experience as a unified phenomenon with a host of factors. (This conceptualization of experience will be further explained in section 3.1). Once we understand these students' paths in higher education, their challenges and their successes, how they make sense (or not) of these experiences, we will be better equipped to guide and support them while at university. This way, students will not only have been provided access to university but also the means to successfully finish and graduate from it.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate special-access students' experiences in higher education in Chile to add to the knowledge we currently have of this growing population, and thus inform programs so that they can better serve these students. With this purpose in mind, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are special-access students' main reported experiences in higher education?
2. How do these students represent and evaluate their reported experiences in higher education?
3. Based on excerpts from selected official documents and social media posts from special-access programs in this university, how do programs represent and evaluate students?

The first question aims at identifying the most important challenging and positive experiences the students interviewed encountered in higher education. This will provide general information on what are important issues that need to be addressed by the programs. However, I believe that a more in-depth analysis can be made by looking at students' discourse and the linguistic choices they make to talk about their experiences in higher education. Therefore, the second question guides the semantic and lexico-grammatical analysis of students' discourse to analyze how they represent their experiences (their choice of participants, processes and circumstances) and how they evaluate these participants and their experiences. Finally, the third question guides an analysis of an important participant in these students' experiences, the programs themselves. Therefore, this last question aims at answering how programs are representing and evaluating the students in their programs, and by doing so, unveiling the underlying ideologies that these programs sustain and promote through their discourses in official documents and social media.

In chapter two, I address the theoretical framework on which I framed and conceptualized this study. In chapter three, I include relevant literature that has examined the experiences of minority students in higher education and I also review some studies that have used the Appraisal System in education. In chapter four, I present the methodology used, and more specifically, I address the theoretical framework on which I grounded this study, the questions that led this research project, and the data sources, the data analysis framework and techniques I used. In chapter four, I summarize the main findings. In chapter five, I discuss these findings from the survey and in six, the findings from the interviews, making connections to previous literature and the particular context of these programs and students. In chapter seven, I present the main conclusions from this study, explain this study's main contributions to the literature and to the

programs I looked into. Finally, in chapter eight, I include some limitations to this study and possible directions for future research.

2.0 Theoretical framework

Our words are a representation of our social and linguistic experiences (Gutiérrez, 1995), making discourse a representation of people's culture and the community(ies) we are part of and with which we interact. However, individuals do not duplicate the community's knowledge; they are constantly renegotiating and reinterpreting their understandings as they take part in conversations in different cultural contexts (Bakhtin, 1986).

Furthermore, we acquire different discourses and knowledge depending on the communities with which we interact and the contexts in which we live our lives. These interactions may lead or not to the acquisition of other goods, such as power, money, status (Gee, 2015). For example, access to and acquisition of the ways with words and interactions in school can leave certain students at an advantage when compared to those who have not had such access.

First-generation students, those who are the first to gain access to higher education in their families, or students who access university using special-access programs, generally do not come from families who have been exposed to the discourses and the meaning-making ways in academia, contrary to many of their classmates experience, situation which can become problematic; being faced at school or university with an unfamiliar way of making sense of the world can marginalize students and exclude them if they do not receive the appropriate support throughout their school years. This was the case for Richard Rodriguez in *Hunger for Memory* (1983) and Mike Rose in *Lives on the boundary* (Rose, 1990). High school graduates, already having acquired academic literacies in their primary and secondary years, are usually expected to be prepared for higher education, including having acquired the ways with words that will be

expected to be used at university. However, acquisition of academic literacy is not the only issue these minority, first-generation students face with once obtaining access to higher education.

This issue of preparedness (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012) has become particularly relevant, especially now that higher education organizations and institutions all over the world have stressed the need to diversify their student population, responding to equity and migratory issues faced by their respective localities, which has opened the door to many more students who would not have otherwise gained access to higher education. Particularly, in Chile, where I conducted the current study, several higher education institutions have addressed the lack of representativeness that lower income students have had in higher education since the Pinochet dictatorship (Espinoza, 2008) and have created in the last decade several special-access programs for these underrepresented students to have visibility in higher education.

As mentioned, access is usually equated to “readiness” to face the academic as well as personal challenges that university might present, leaving sometimes students to their own devices to overcome them. This directly relates to how students identify themselves in relation to their peers (general and special admission ones) and how these conceptualizations of self may impact their academic performance, and of course, their lives and futures.

Considering that our words are partly a representation of our social and linguistic experiences (Gutiérrez, 1995), in order to have a more in depth understanding of special-access students’ experiences in higher education, the current study will have at its core the intersection of discourse and identity. Therefore, in this chapter I address the way in which discourse and identity were conceptualized in this study, and the intricate connections between the two. I focus on discourse and identity to move beyond pinpointing these students’ experiences in higher education, and explore how it is that they (re)create such experiences through discourse, using several

resources such as positioning themselves and others in their discourse; later, I briefly address two complementary discourse approaches, Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics, including a brief description of the two main systems I used, Transitivity and Appraisal. These two theoretical frameworks conceive language as part of human experience and as a meaning-making social practice, making discourses diverse representations of social life (Fairclough, 2012). A more thorough explanation of how I drew from these frameworks for this particular study is included in the Methods section (4.6.2.2)

2.1 Discourse and identity

According to Lewis & del Valle (2009), there have been three waves through which identity has been conceptualized in sociocultural research on adolescent literacy since 1970s. These waves, even though described in terms of decades in which specific studies took place, are not meant to be evaluative but analytical, not linear or unidirectional, but recursive, moving back and forth with “an eye toward the future and a serious respect for previous contributions” (p.319).

In the first wave, in the 1970s-1980s period, identity was theorized as stable and unified. According to Lewis and Del Valle, this view of identity answered to a need to fight back deficit perspectives of cultures that abounded in earlier research. As a result, identity was essentialized, i.e., particular social and cultural identities were associated with a stable set of characteristics, leading to research on inequality that zeroed in on the differences between school and home cultures rather than on the deficits of the homes and minds of students from non-dominant cultures (Delpit, 1988; Heath, 1983; McDermott, 1993; Rodriguez, 1983, among others). The second wave encompasses research in which adolescents use specific literacy practices to skillfully mediate

their identities in social settings. “These negotiated or performed identities shape and are shaped by literacy practices that serve a social function, positioning the individual in relation to peers, family, or institutional authority (in this case school)” (Lewis & del Valle, 2009, p. 313). Finally, the third wave portrays identities as hybrid, meta-discursive and spatial. Works in this wave include research in digital and transnational spaces that present how individuals can define and redefine themselves and enact different agencies to fight oppression or navigate new cultural and linguistic situations.

The notion to identity that most closely relates to this study corresponds to the second and third wave as described by Lewis and Del Valle (2009) and move away from fixed, prescriptive notions of identity. Identity in these studies has been described as multiple (Baxter, 2002; Fernsten, 2005; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Tangalakis & Vallejo, 2015); multifaceted (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996; B. A. Brown, 2004; D. Brown & Kelly, 2001; Godley, 2003; Hughes, 2001; Zavala, 2009); contrary to discrete parameters (Curwood & Gibbons, 2009); not static but dialectical and ongoing (Curwood & Gibbons, 2009); not stagnant, but fluid (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Tangalakis & Vallejo, 2015)

2.1.1 Poststructuralist theory

Concerning identity, this study draws from Poststructuralist theory, which posits that our sense of self, what has been called by poststructuralists as *subjectivity*, is not fixed, unified or rational, but rather constantly positioned and repositioned through discourse (Foucault, 1982). The terms subject and subjectivity are critical in poststructuralist theory as they signal the break from humanist conceptions of the individual, i.e., that essence is at the core of the individual, making the individual unique, fixed, and coherent (Weedon, 1997). On the contrary, poststructuralism

postulates that subjectivity is “precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p.32). Following this conceptualization of identity, the sociohistorical context and the interactions, usually linguistic, with others will affect and shape a person’s sense of self (Godley, 2003), thus stressing an interactional aspect of identity negotiation.

Furthermore, poststructuralists conceive language as the common factor when analyzing social organization, social meaning, power and individual consciousness (Weedon, 1997). More specifically, this theory posits that it is in language where actual and possible forms of social organization and their sociopolitical consequences are defined and contested. It is in language where individuals construct their sense of self, their *subjectivities*. Thus, through our repertoire of linguistic practices we are able to produce our subjectivities.

This interactional aspect of identity construction in language has influenced other theories of identity and language such as Bucholtz and Hall’s sociocultural linguistic perspective of identity that synthesizes key work on identity from different traditions, offering a general sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity, focusing on “the details of language and the workings of culture and society” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586).

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not a single theory, but a range of different theories, which ascribe to a variety of different methods. CDA differs from non-critical approaches in the way in which they approach social practices; non-critical approaches treat social practices only as patterns of social interaction, while critical approaches also consider the implications of such

patterns in terms of status, solidarity, how social goods are distributed, and power (Gee, 2014). According to Gee, critical discourse analysts argue that language-in-use is part of, as well as partially constitutive of, specific social practices.

Discourse studies emerged in the 1960s and even though these studies incorporated new ideas to the study language and communication, many of the first contributors were rather structuralist and formal (T. A. van Dijk, 1972, 1985, 2008; T. A. Van Dijk, 1977). Context began to take part in these studies as part of a pragmatic component in discourse analysis. Other attempts were made to incorporate context, but the notion was rather limited and was mostly constrained to the verbal context or co-text (Petöfi, 1971). It was not until late 1970s and early 1980's that social, historical, and cultural contexts were considered in the study of discourse structures (T. A. van Dijk, 2008)

In the 1970s, Discourse Analysis (DA) was only considering the immediate, more isolated social context of language and failing to consider broader social forces, e.g., power, hegemony, ideologies, etc. By the end of the 1970s a team of researchers led by Roger Fowler initiated a more critical and sociopolitical approach to language use, discourse and power; they advocated the study of 'critical linguistics' (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979). This movement became international in the 1980s and was influenced by European scholars (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). With Norman Fairclough's (1989) *Language and Power*, the term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was coined and since then, it positioned itself beyond just another approach to DA or as a way to consider social phenomena within discourse; it is a 'method' or 'perspective' of theorization, analysis, and application within the broader field of Discourse Analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

According to Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2009), any social phenomenon can be looked under a critical lens in order to challenge it and not take it for granted. In the words of Wodak & Meyer (2009), CDA “want[s] to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection” (p.7).

It is important to note that there is no single, homogenous version of CDA but rather a range of approaches that can be considered CDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012) Even though all CDA authors emphasize the need to draw on several different linguistic methods to analyze issues such as reception and production of texts, they all agree on perceiving language as a way to social construction, having language shaping society and being shaped by it (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Thus, CDA is not so interested in language analysis in isolation (micro-analysis alone) but rather in the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures (micro analysis in relation to a macro analysis); therefore, this approach to CDA does not intend to replace the micro with the macro, but to use the macro as a necessary complement of the micro (Van Dijk, 1998).

Fairclough (1989, 2013, 2015) posits that a critical language study is one that analyzes linguistic elements to unveil connections that may exist between language, power and ideology, which are commonly hidden from people. Thus, CDA brings a theoretical component to the way in which we conceive the relation between language and social construction at the same time that provides the methodology, the linguistic analytic tools to unveil such relations.

In this study, I examined students’ reported experiences in higher education from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective to unveil power relations and ideologies present in students’ interactions in higher education and how these are represented and enacted in their linguistic choices. As well, I drew from one theory of language, Systemic Functional Linguistics and, most

specifically Appraisal and Transitivity Systems to analyze students' representation and evaluations of their experiences at university. These frameworks will be presented in the following sections.

2.3 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereon SFL) is a model of language developed by Michael A. K. Halliday in the 1950s and 60s. Halliday's linguistic theory, inspired by J.R. Firth, considers language as social semiotic (Halliday, 1978), i.e., language as a resource to create and interpret meanings in social contexts (Ghio & Fernández, 2008). Systemicists propose four claims about language (a) that language is functional; (b) that the function of language is to create meanings; (c) that the meanings created are affected by socio-cultural contexts in which they are exchanged, and; (d) that when using language, we are carrying out a semiotic process, one that creates meaning through linguistic choices (Eggins, 2004). Therefore, "descriptions of language are oriented towards context, grounded in discourse and focused on meaning" (Caffarel, Martin, & Matthiessen, 2004, p.2), considering grammar and discourse as a set of resources that allow us to create meanings, more than as rules to organize structure (Martin & Rose, 2008).

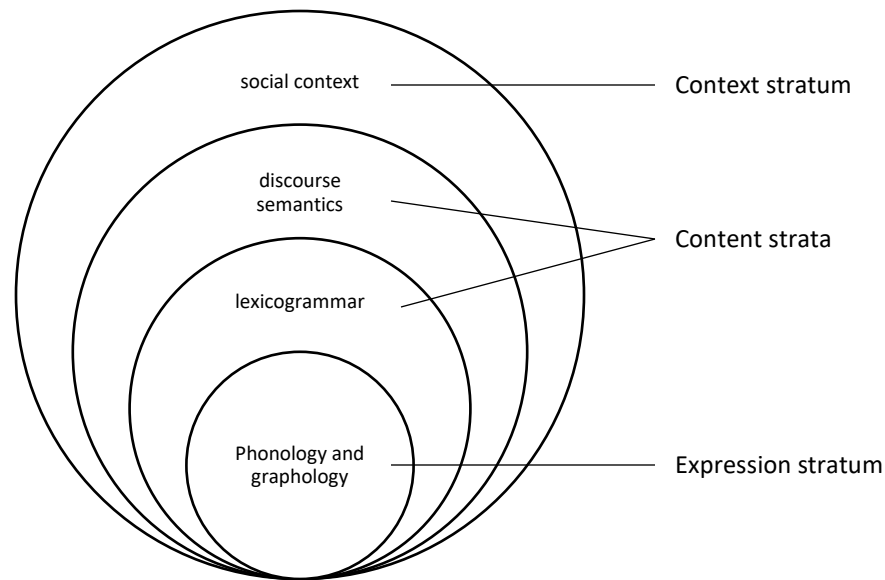


Figure 1 Four strata from SFL model (adapted from Caffarel, 2003)

Figure 1 shows the four strata model of SFL to describe language, having the linguistic system (discourse semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology and graphology) inserted in context, making the latter an essential part of the model. Moreover, these strata are related among them by realization, which can be interpreted as metaredundancy. Following the latter notion, strata in the stratification hierarchy depicted in Figure 1 are not only realized in pairs, e.g., context to semantics, semantics to lexicogrammar, etc. but instead, “lexicogrammar is realized by phonology and semantics is realized by the realization of lexicogrammar in phonology and context is realized by the realization of semantics in lexicogrammar” (Matthiessen, 2007, p.521).

According to Halliday & Matthiessen (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), any situation can be characterized in terms of field –what is happening in the situation, the nature of it and the domain of experience of the activity; tenor –who is participating in the situation and what roles they have; and mode –what is the role that language, and any other semiotic system, plays in the situation. To further develop the model, these three contextual categories of field, tenor, and mode,

were later conceptualized in relation to the concept of genre (Martin & Rose, 2008). According to Martin & Rose (2008), social context categories of field, tenor, and mode were seen as register, and genre was conceived as the system of selected configurations of field, tenor, and mode, taking place at recurring stages of discourse.

As well, there are three “complementary modes of meaning” –what systemically are considered as “modules” of relatively interdependent choices and that are structurally different kinds of realization patterns (Caffarel et al., 2004, p.26). These are the ideational resources by means of which we represent experience, the interpersonal resources through which we enact relationships, and the textual resources with which we organize text (Caffarel et al., 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2013).

These three types of meaning –ideational, interpersonal, and textual– that occur simultaneously and can be found fused together in linguistic units, allude to the semantic complexity of language and the fact that, as mentioned before, in this theory language is considered a semiotic system, organized as sets of choices (Eggins, 2004). Each choice in the linguistic system is meaningful when considered against all the other options from which it was made. These social functions or metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) are part of the intrinsic theory of language function developed in SFL. Furthermore, unlike other functional theories, there is also an extrinsic one (Martin & White, 2005). In this extrinsic theory of language function, the three metafunctions were projected on social context in the categories mentioned before of field, mode and tenor, as shown in Figure 2.

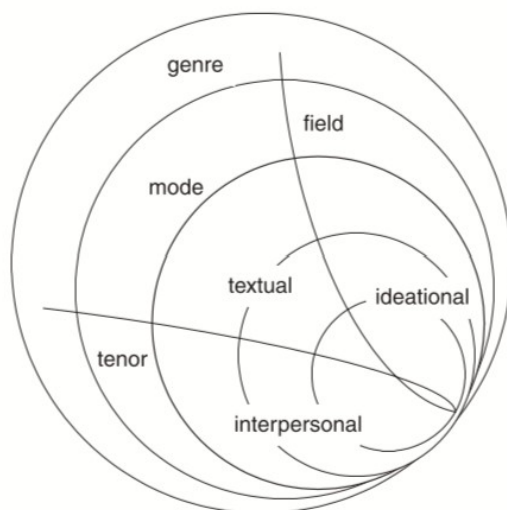


Figure 2 Metafunctions and intrinsic/extrinsic models of context (adapted from Martin & White, 2005)

Because these three metafunctions work simultaneously, if we look at any piece of discourse through any of these perspectives, we will identify different functions that are realized by different patterns of meanings (Martin & Rose, 2013). These sets of meanings are known as discourse systems. Table 1 below shows the different categories of context, the three metafunctions found in each context and the corresponding discourse systems.

Table 1 Categories of context, metafunction, and discourse systems (based on Martin & Rose, 2008)

General categories of context	Metafunction	Discourse system
Field <i>how we interpret and represent the world</i>	Ideational meaning (experiential)	Transitivity (participants + processes + circumstances)
Tenor <i>relationship between speakers, social roles, etc.</i>	Interpersonal meaning	Mood and Modality Appraisal (attitude: affect, judgement, appreciation)
Mode <i>how is the text organized</i>	Textual meaning	Theme system Cohesive devices

Given that the focus of this study is to understand special-access students' experiences at the university, in order to do so, it becomes crucial to understand how these students represent their experiences and enact and evaluate their relationships at university. Therefore, I will be looking at the ideational and interpersonal meanings enacted by students through the interviews, using the Transitivity and the Appraisal systems. In the following subsections, I will briefly describe these two systems.

2.3.1 Appraisal system

The appraisal system was developed by Jim Martin in the Sydney School in the 1980s and 1990s from the Mood and Modality systems previously conceptualized by Halliday. Martin's work has been refined and developed by scholars in many languages and different fields of study. This evolution was born as a necessity to have an appropriate framework to deal with different types of evaluations, and it was triggered, more specifically, by the work developed on narrative genres and the discourse semantic perspective (Oteíza, 2017).

This semantic system is concerned with evaluation; it deals with interpersonal meanings and the resources included in the system are used to negotiate social relations, by telling our readers/listeners/viewers what our attitudes are about things and people (Martin & Rose, 2008). As it can be seen in Figure 3 below, there are three areas in the appraisal system: One is *attitude*, and this has to do to the evaluation of feelings, people's characters and things. Attitudes, in turn, can be made more or less intense and this aspect is called *graduation*. And the third aspect relates to whom we attribute the attitude, and this is referred to as *engagement*.

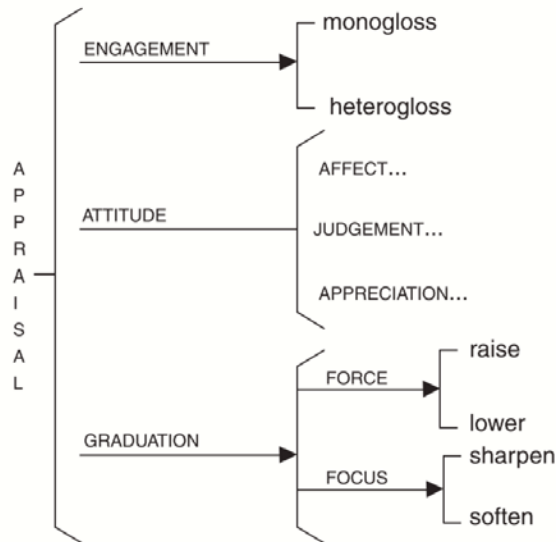


Figure 3 Overview of Appraisal system(from Martin & White, 2005, p.38)

Concerning attitude, all three kinds –affect, judgement, and appreciation- can be classified according to loading (positive/negative) and according to whether they are implicit or explicit evaluations. According to Martin & White (2005), explicit appraisal is called *inscribed* and implicit appraisal is referred to as *invoked*. I will now briefly describe and present examples for the three kinds of attitude mentioned: affect, judgement, and appreciation and present a general introduction to engagement and graduation.

2.3.1.1 Affect

This semantic region of affect refers to emotion and feelings. Following Martin & White (2005) and Oteíza (2017), affect is classified using six variables:

- a. Feelings are positive or negative
 - positive affect *the student was **happy***
 - negative affect *the student was **sad***

b. Feelings can be realized as involving a physical manifestation, as an emotional state or mental process, or as a relational process.

- physical manifestation *the student **cried***
- emotional/mental state *the student **disliked** the class*
- relational process *the student felt **sad***

c. Feelings can be considered in relation to a trigger (direct at or reacting to it) or as a general mood of an unclear origin (undirected mood).

- reaction to other *the student **disliked** having to read in English*
- undirected mood *the student was **sad***

d. Feelings can be graded according to intensity.

- low *the student **disliked** the class*
- median *the student **hated** the class*
- high *the student **detested** the class*

e. Feelings can involve intention rather than reaction (in relation to an irrealis or realis stimulus).

- realis *the student **disliked** the class*
- irrealis *the student **feared** the class*

f. There are three main groups of emotions in affect that can be positive or negative: un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction.

- un/happiness *the student was **cheerful/heart-broken***
- in/security *the student was **surprised/comfortable***

dis/satisfaction *the student was **bored/thrilled***

2.3.1.2 Judgement

Through judgement we construe our attitudes towards people and the way they behave. Judgements can be of two types, those that concern with social esteem –personal judgements of admiration or criticism-, and those oriented to social sanction –moral judgements of praise or condemnation (Martin & Rose, 2013; Martin & White, 2005). Table 2 below shows these two main types of judgements and their corresponding subcategories.

**Table 2 Types of judgement with examples
(based on Martin & Rose, 2013)**

Category	Positive	Negative
SOCIAL ESTEEM	[admire]	[criticize]
normality - <i>are they special?</i>	fortunate, normal, average, everyday, fashionable	unfortunate, odd, peculiar, dated, retrograde
capacity - <i>are they capable?</i>	vigorous, insightful, clever, together, sane	weak, slow, stupid, neurotic, insane
tenacity - <i>are they dependable?</i>	brave, reliable, dependable, persevering, resolute	cowardly, unreliable, undependable, distracted, dissolute
SOCIAL SANCTION	[praise]	[condemn]
veracity - <i>are they honest?</i>	truthful, honest, sincere, genuine, direct	dishonest, deceitful, insincere, manipulative
propriety - <i>are they beyond reproach?</i>	good, moral, ethical, fair, sensitive, kind	bad, immoral, evil, unfair, insensitive, mean

According to Martin & Rose (2013), social esteem involves admiration and criticism and if you have difficulties in this area (too much negative esteem), you may need a therapist. Judgements of esteem relate to normality, capacity and tenacity. On the other hand, social sanction deals with praise and condemnation, which usually have a legal implication, so if you have issues with this area (too much negative sanction), you may need a lawyer. Judgements of sanction relate to behavior being evaluated in terms of its veracity and propriety.

It is important to mention that, as it is true for appreciation as well, judgements are very much linked to the cultural and ideological situation in which they are operating (Kaplan, 2004). The way in which people evaluate morality, legality, capacity and other characteristics of the human behavior will be determined by the culture in which they live, their own beliefs and experiences.

2.3.1.3 Appreciation

Appreciation considers out attitudes towards things made, performances given, and natural phenomena. Appreciations can be about our reactions to things, their composition and their value.

**Table 3 Types of appreciation with examples
(based on Martin & Rose, 2013, p.69)**

Type of appreciation	Positive	Negative
Reaction: impact <i>did it grab me?</i>	arresting, captivating, involving, interesting, dramatic	dull, boring, dry, uninviting, flat
Reaction: quality <i>did I like it?</i>	beautiful, appealing, pleasing, delightful, attractive,	ugly, off-putting, revolting, irritating, weird
Composition: balance <i>did it hang together?</i>	balanced, harmonious, proportional	unbalanced, discordant, incomplete
Composition: complexity <i>was it hard to follow?</i>	simple, elegant, intricate, detailed, precise	ornamental, over-complicated, puzzling, monolithic, simplistic
Valuation <i>was it worthwhile?</i>	challenging, significant, profound, provocative, unique	shallow, insignificant, unsatisfying, sentimental, generic

Table 3 shows a few examples, positive and negative, of the five different types of appreciation. It is important to mention that appreciation is sensitive to field, especially valuation, because our valuation of things will depend on our institutional focus.

2.3.1.4 Graduation

This second dimension of the Appraisal system is a semantic space that refers to the way in which speakers raise or lower the value of attitudes within their discourse. Graduation happens on two axes, grading in relation to intensity or amount and grading in relation to prototypicality and preciseness to the category drawn (Martin & White, 2005). Thus, the former is known as *force* and the latter as *focus*. For force, we usually rely on adverbs known as “intensifiers” e.g., *slightly* interesting, *extremely* interesting. As well, force can be expressed in terms of amount e.g., *small* classes, *large* classes. Focus, on the other hand, works on values of sharpness with non-gradable resources. For example, towards the higher degree end of the spectrum in terms of prototypicality of the terms *friend* and *evil*, we can have *true* friend, *pure* evil; while on the opposite end we can have *kind of a* friend, *sort of* evil.

2.3.1.5 Engagement

The third and last dimension of the appraisal system is engagement and it deals with the sources of evaluations. This system, inspired by the work of Russian linguist Bakhtin (1981), offers resources to identify and analyze the source or origin of the attitude. As well, engagement also deals with the meanings by which authors recognize or ignore different points of view from their own, negotiating an interpersonal space for their own views among this diversity. There are two main options for engagement: monogloss or heterogloss. The former refers to bare assertions that ignore the diversity of voices, e.g., *Politicians are greedy*; while the latter recognizes, one way or another, the existence of other voices and alternative positions (Kaplan, 2004), e.g., *Most people believe politicians are greedy*. As well, through its taxonomy (disclaim, proclaim, entertain, attribute), engagement allows us to identify the particular dialogistic positioning associated with

particular meanings and describe what is at stake when one of the meanings is employed, rather than another one (Martin & White, 2005).

2.3.2 Transitivity system

According to Ghio & Fernández (2008) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the transitivity system can be defined as “the grammatical resource to create the flow of experience in terms of a process realized through grammar in the clause” (p.93, my translation). With this in consideration, in the clause experience is constructed using participants, processes and circumstances. The participant is the one who takes part in the process or is affected or benefitted by the scope of a happening (Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997). Participants are identified using different names depending on their relation to the process type. In the following paragraph, I will briefly review the main processes (material, mental, relational) and combined (verbal, relational, and existential), their characteristics, and most common participants involved. A summary table (Table 7) is included at the end of this section.

2.3.2.1 Material processes and participants

Material clauses construe happenings and actions, which are typically concrete because they entail changes in the material world and we can perceive them, e.g., They built a house. However, material processes can also help us represent our experiences in abstract terms, e.g., His arguments destroyed the theory. Following Martin et al. (1997), participants are usually realized by nominal groups, and those associated to material processes can be:

- Actor: the one involved in doing the material process
- Goal: the one who is affected by the process, usually created by it.

- Beneficiary: usually preceded by a preposition, the one benefitting from a doing.
- Range: one specifying the scope of a happening and not affected by the process.

Not only present in material process, circumstances are less centrally involved in the process than participants are, and they can be typically realized by an adverbial or nominal group or prepositional phrase. Circumstances add information, for example, about the location of the process (e.g., in August, from Paris, in the school); how it was carried out (e.g., very quickly, with a computer); with whom (e.g., with her friends); or why (e.g., because she didn't have the time). Table 4 below shows examples of material processes and the participants mentioned.

Table 4 Examples of participant roles in material clauses

Actor	Process	Goal	Beneficiary	Range	Circumstance
The student	wrote	an essay	(for the professor)		in the morning.
The professor	gave	the book	(to her student)		for her to study.
The student	won			the competition	

2.3.2.2 Mental clauses and participants

Following Martin et al. (1997), mental processes “construe a person involved in conscious processing, including of perception, cognition and affection” (p.105). These processes have an inherent participant, the Senser, which is consciously participating in the sensing, and when there are nominal groups that denote non-conscious entities, these have to be metaphorically personified, as in “My stomach hates coffee”. In addition to the Senser, another participant, the Phenomenon, can be present, which refers to the entity created or entertained by consciousness and can take various grammatical forms. For examples:

I (Senser) like (mental process) reading (Phenomenon) at night (Circumstance).

The secretary (Senser) heard (mental process) their fight (Phenomenon).

Their work (Phenomenon) interested (mental process) them (Senser)

2.3.2.3 Relational clauses and participants

These clauses are a generalization of what was usually referred to as “copula” constructions (Martin et al., 1997) and they construe being by attribution and identification. For attributive relational processes, there is usually a Carrier and an Attribute, and for identifying relational clauses, participants are Token and Value. Table 5 below shows a couple of examples for both types of relational clauses.

Table 5 Examples of participants in relational clauses

Attributive			Identifying		
Carrier	Process	Attribute	Token	Process	Value
Your books	are	so expensive	This book	is	a classic
Everything	is	in order	Tomorrow	is	March 23 rd .

2.3.2.4 Verbal clauses and participants

Verbal processes are combined processes from mental and relational ones. These represent processes of saying, such as stating, asking, commanding and processes not necessarily verbal, such as indicating, showing. Participants involved in verbal processes can be:

- Sayer: the central participant, human or human-like.
- Receiver: similar to a verbal Beneficiary, the one receiving the message and usually preceded by “to”

- Locution: the content of what is being said, quoting or reporting what was said, usually marked by a different clause.
- Verbiage: content of saying, similar to a verbal Range.

Table 6 below shows examples of verbal processes and the participants just mentioned.

Table 6 Examples of participant roles in verbal clauses

Sayer	Process	Receiver	Locution	Verbiage
The student	told	the class		his story
The professor	mentioned	to me	he was going away.	

2.3.2.5 Behavioral clauses and participants

Behavioral processes, according to Martin et al. (1997), construe behavior “including mental and verbal behavior, as an active version of verbal and mental processes” (1997, p. 109), e.g., gossip, watch, listen, smile. These processes have a behavior and a range. For example, they (behavior) were singing (behavioral process) a beautiful song (range). These processes are similar to mental processes because they have a conscious participant involved; however, they are unlike mental and verbal, but closer to material ones in that there is an unmarked representation of time and they cannot report. For example:

- The professor **is looking** at the student (behavioral process)
- The professor **sees** the student; The professor **can see** the student (mental process)

2.3.2.6 Existential clauses and participants

These clauses are similar to relational ones because they create the participant involved in the process, but they differ from them in that there is only one participant, the existent, as it is shown in the following example:

There was (existential process) a problem (Existent) when we arrived (Circumstance).

2.3.2.7 Summary of processes and participants

The processes and participants presented thus far encompass the main elements through which we construe experience in the transitivity system, which belongs to the experiential metafunction. The information included by no means aims at being exhaustive and for further details on the transitivity system please refer to, for example, Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Martin et al. (1997) for descriptions of the English language and to Ghio & Fernández (2008) for translation into Spanish.

As a way of condensing the information presented so far, I finish this section with Table 7, which is a short summary of all processes and participants discussed.

Table 7 Summary table of processes and participants

Type of process	Associated participants	Example	Other
Material	Actor, Goal (Beneficiary)	Elsa opened the door Dani bought a card for his sister	Circumstance
Mental	Senser, Phenomenon	Sarah couldn't understand it.	Time
Relational	Carrier, Attribute Token, Value	That dog is really cute. That dog is my friend.	Place Manner
Verbal	Sayer, Receiver, Locution, Verbiage	She told me the truth. She asked her what they said.	Quantity Reason
Behavioral	Behaver (Range)	She was smiling. They were watching the telenovela.	etc.
Existential	Existent	There will be a party.	

In the following section I present the literature review that frames this study, addressing minority and first-generation students' experiences in higher education and studies that have used the Appraisal system in the field of education.

3.0 Literature review

Framing this dissertation study that looked at the reported experiences of a group of Chilean university students from three special admission programs in one higher education institution, I start this review of the literature by examining some of the main issues that the literature has identified as affecting minority higher education students in the U.S. and South America, by using some form of discourse or text analysis. I place special interest in research that has explored the experiences of special-access students in Chile and I also include studies that even though used a different analytical methodology, have as its main participants students from any of the three special-access programs on which this investigation focuses. Then, given that within SFL I focus on Appraisal System, I move on to reviewing studies who have used the Appraisal System in education.

3.1 Minority and first-generation students' experiences in higher education

First, I will start by explaining how I am conceptualizing minority students and experience in this section. Minority status has been conceived through several different perspectives, such as language, race, gender, class, ethnicity, but always conceiving an underlying issue of power in relation to the dominant group(s). Following Healey, Stepnick, & O'Brien (2018), minority status has to do with distribution of resources and power. Furthermore, members of a minority group usually experience a pattern of disadvantage or inequality; they share a visible trait or characteristic that differentiates them, such as accent or ethnicity; they are aware that they share their status with

other members of the group; membership to the group is usually determined at birth, and they tend to form close relationships within the group, such as marriage, friendship, dating (Wagley & Harris, 1958).

I decided to use the term *minority* in relation to access to higher education in the literature because special-access students, as it will be explained later in the findings, comprises a very complex group of students whose identities intersect on shared traits that make them a minority some way or another (socio-economic status, ethnicity, first language). Actually, it is because of some these traits that these students were selected to be part of the programs or initiatives that took them to higher education. Such programs and initiatives are mostly created to provide visibility to students who historically have been underrepresented in higher education. The same happens with first-generation students, who have become the first ones in their families in obtaining access to higher education, because of systemic inequities that are anchored in some of the traits mentioned before in relation to minorities. Therefore, these two terms were useful to find literature that would help me understand and explore some of the experiences these students have in higher education.

Concerning experience, I conceptualized it inspired by the term *perezhivanie* in Russian (which can be translated as “lived experience” in English) as used by Vygotsky (1994). This term refers to the process of experiencing and the presupposed unity of intellectual and affective processes that occur in concrete social contexts (van Compernelle, 2019). Following Vygotsky, *perezhivanie* is a unit in which there is a representation of the environment being experienced (something outside the person) and, on the other hand, there is a representation of how the subject is experiencing it. In other words, in a *perezhivanie* we consider the indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics (Blunden, 2020). From this notion, it is impossible to separate intellect, from affect or psychological functioning from the situated environment, because

they together form a unified whole (van Compernelle, 2019; Zinchenko, 2009). Based on this, I approach special-access students' experiences as a unified phenomenon with a host of factors, including human relations of different kinds (i.e., academic, social, familial) that take place inside and outside the institution (i.e., the family, the university) during the time these students have attended university. As the following literature review will show, students' experience in higher education has usually been separated into components for their study e.g., their identity development, how they access different resources, how they interact with specific participants such as professors, how they deal with academic workload, etc. In this study, I hope to capture a more global view of students' experience to understand the aggregate of human relations and institutions that have taken place during these students' time at the university. It is through this global perspective that I can later identify, for example, relevant actors and their specific roles in students' identity development or students' overcoming of specific challenges.

Moving to the literature, the studies reviewed include pieces that analyze minority, first-generation, and special-access students' in higher education in the U.S., South America and Chile. As mentioned, even though several of these studies were selected because they used some type of discourse analysis (as the current study), I also included research whose target population was special-access students in higher education in Chile but used other qualitative methods of analysis.

Among the studies reviewed, four main issues were reported by students in relation to their experiences in higher education: (a) problems to integrate with academic community and socialize with peers; (b) difficulty to understand academic assignments and faculty requirements; (c) issues associated to family relations, and (d) quality of living.

First, the most common issue mentioned by the studies reviewed was the feeling of not belonging to the academic community, ranging from feeling different from peers, hindering

socialization, (Flanagan Borquez, 2017; Gallardo, Lorca, Morrás, & Vergara, 2014; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Sobrero, Lara-Quinteros, Méndez, & Suazo, 2014; Soto Hernández, 2016), to outward discrimination (Chavez, 2008; Fernsten, 2005; Mapes, 2011; Ossola, 2010; Preece, 2015; Zavala, 2011b). For example, in their study, Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro Jiménez (2012) interviewed five Latino/a students who graduated top of their class in high school but encountered several challenges in higher education, among them was the fact that students reported feeling less prepared for university when comparing themselves with their classmates, mainly because of their social or cultural capital.

Andrea Flanagan Borquez found similar feelings among her participants in her study that looked at the experiences of first-generation students in Chilean Universities (Flanagan Borquez, 2017). She found that students acknowledged being different from peers when considering prior knowledge, mainly due to differences in curriculum during their high school years. Participants saw this difference reflected in how their classmates seemed better prepared to face university given that they had already covered at several of the contents covered at university, which were absolutely foreign and new to the students interviewed.

Similarly, Gallardo et al. (2014) looked at the high school to college transition experiences of 12 students who were admitted through a special-access program at a traditional university in Chile. Gallardo et al. found that even before entering university, students were anxious about socializing with other students because they knew their classmates came from different, usually private, elite high schools, had their own social-networks and were reluctant to open up to new people. Because of this, students from this special-access program were thankful that they had the chance to meet other students who entered through a similar way during induction before classes started and mentioned that this allowed them to create a “family”.

Another study, that looked at the experiences of students who were admitted to health majors through SIPEE, Sistema de Ingreso Prioritario de Equidad Educativa (System of Priority Access of Educational Equity) at the University of Chile (one of the programs this study analyzes) found that students felt at a great disadvantage when comparing themselves with their peers, and had a hard time dealing with low academic performance, which completely contrasted with their high school experiences (Sobrero et al., 2014). It is interesting to note that even though most studies mention these issues with socialization among the participants, especially when comparing themselves with their classmates who did not enter university the same way they did, findings also show that students acknowledge the importance of persevering through these challenges and see the value of being in good terms with peers. Further, students felt that having a good relation with their classmates was an important step toward academic and social strengthening at university (Gallardo et al., 2014). Moreover, students reported that it was difficult to maintain this focus on difference while negotiating college-going identities and moved from stressing the differences to highlighting the similarities, acknowledging that everyone struggles at universities, just on different ways (Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012). In terms of discrimination, students reported mostly to be alienated due to not using the discourse that was deemed “proper” in academia (Fernsten, 2005) or the correct dialect (Chavez, 2008; Preece, 2015; Zavala, 2011b). These issues also had other repercussions as it will be addressed below.

The second point that was mentioned was in relation to difficulties complying with academic standards and certain communication issues with professors that thwarted students’ performance at university. Traits relating to students’ identities were mentioned as factors that clashed with certain requirements or expectations at university or college; for example, some studies mentioned language use as a factor (Fernsten, 2005; Ossola, 2010; Zavala, 2011b), while

others had problems with finding a voice in academia without losing their sense self in the process (Zavala, 2009, 2011a). For the former, having a first language other than the official one at university, such as in the case of indigenous students in South America, resulted in a major conflict for students; Students embraced the knowledge they were acquiring at university but, at the same time, felt that the more they learned, the more they were estranging from their communities outside university (Zavala, 2011b). As well, uninterrupted use of Spanish was seen as a difficulty (Ossola, 2010). For the latter, students struggled understanding how to create a voice that was accepted in academic contexts without losing their identities and dealing with the notion that knowledge seemed not to move into something different but learning something better to leave behind the bad (Zavala 2009). On the issue of voice, plagiarism was something that a few of the studies mentioned as something that troubled students (Zavala, 2009, 2011a). In two studies by Zavala, the author interviewed Quechua speakers who were currently attending university. In Zavala (2011a), the author discusses the case of Emilia, who felt a tension between evidence she valued and evidence that was valued by the academic community. Emilia thought her opinion about a specific topic and repeating what a source said were two excluding practices. In Zavala (2009), the author found that, Paula, a woman in her 40s getting her master's degree in anthropology, felt her voice as an author in academia was a rather distant one, and that in the course of appropriating academic literacy there was a risk to start seeing "her ways" with a distance that scared her.

Another issue that made it difficult for students to comply with academic standards at university had to do with understanding what professors were requesting and the requirements needed for assignments. For example, Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez (2012) found that the Latina/o students they interviewed felt that professors' expectations regarding their academic literacies were not clear, and that it was only until they saw their low grades that they realized they

had not done what was expected of them. The students reported that communicating with professors and TAs was a hard-learned skill that required for them push their limits and get out of their comfort zone to succeed at university. Other studies (Flanagan Borquez, 2017; Gallardo et al., 2014) stressed the importance of students' interactions with professors, beyond the requirements. For instance, Flanagan Borquez in her study of 11 first-generation students in Chilean universities found that students acknowledged the relevance that professors' flexibility, or lack thereof, had in their experiences at university; the students realized that institutions were created based on the idea of a "traditional student", one that had no obligations other than studying. For example, for students, having to leave early from class to take care of a sick child, or missing a test because of conflicts with their work schedule were situations whose impact on their academic performance depended almost entirely on the will of the professor.

The third issue mentioned by students related to their relations with their families. Studies reviewed showed contrasting experiences concerning students and their decision to attend higher education institutions, reflecting the complexity of profiles that embrace the label "first-generation" students. In the previously mentioned study by Flanagan Borquez (2017), due to their being at the university, students reported feeling closer to their families; there was a sense of pride in their families for having someone achieved such an accomplishment. However, Flanagan Borquez also mentions that some students expressed feeling themselves more distant to their families because higher education studies gave them a different social status. Furthermore, the latter students felt they had developed a critical thinking during their time at university that made them analyze things that were once taken for granted, also adding to the distance with their families. Concerning the influence of the family in the decision of pursuing a higher education degree, Soto Hernández' (2016) study explored the experiences of 12 first-generation students in

three universities in the region of Concepción (South of Chile) and found that for most of the students interviewed, the idea came from their parents; their parents had made a strategical decision and sacrificed so that they could study. For other students, there was an extra layer of pressure to succeed beyond obtaining better employment opportunities and salary; going to university was a given, a fact, it was expected of them, and they felt their families' pressure to achieve fulfill this expectation.

The fourth issue that was reported by students was quality of living. Here a few issues arose i.e., financial need, long commutes, and mental health, as the most important ones in this respect. In her study, Andrea Flanagan Borquez (2017) found that SES and monetary capital was a relevant factor among students, one that even promoted desertion. The students she interviewed expressed feeling worried trying to secure funds for tuition and college expenses, which was constantly distracting them from their academic duties. Furthermore, Marybeth Walpole (2003) used longitudinal data to analyze how SES affected college experiences of college students in the U.S. The author found that despite low-SES students being more upwardly mobile when compared with their parents, higher SES students still had advantages. Similarly, students from low SES backgrounds who attend a 4-year college work more, study less, report lower GPAs than their higher SES peers. Apart from money, commuting also added to students' stress at university. Flanagan Borquez (2017) explained her participants had to travel 2-3 hours to arrive for classes, which, as previously mentioned, had a direct impact in after-hours academic activities, such as group studies. Furthermore, as a result of the differences that students reported feeling when comparing themselves from their classmates, they reported feeling sad and lonely, which was heightened for students who lived in regions other than the ones they were studying in (Sobrero et al., 2014).

In general, most of the studies reviewed mention reports of students having issues to integrate to the academic community and to understand what is required of them to succeed. As well, students explain that issues with their families and relating to their quality of living affect their academic performance and mental health, having a negative impact in their lives while at university. It is interesting to note, however, that challenges at university, as any situation in our lives, change in time and their status might change depending on the priorities that students set in their lives to be able to cope with the demands in higher education.

3.2 The Appraisal system in education

This section aims at providing a general overview of studies that have used the Appraisal System. Given that this study has a focus on education and the Appraisal System³ has been used to analyze discourse in a variety of disciplines, e.g., journalism, law, literature, etc., in the following paragraphs I will focus on those studies that focused on educational contexts.

Several studies have analyzed evaluations made in textbooks as way to evidence the ideologies being presented in them and how certain historical and political events were constructed and presented in these texts (Fernández, 2017; Moyano, 2010; Oteíza, 2003, 2009; Oteíza & Pinto, 2008; Simpson, 2010). For example, Oteíza (2003, 2009) and Oteíza and Pinto (2008) look at history textbooks at different levels (primary and secondary) and analyze how participants and processes are represented and evaluated in the dictatorship in Chile and in Chile and Spain (Oteíza

³ The studies included in this section have used the Appraisal System as a focus in the analysis and presentation of findings but most of them also included analyses of ideational and textual meanings, as these meanings rely and feed of each other.

& Pinto, 2008). These studies yielded interesting results; drawing in a broad conceptual way from evaluation analysis (Hunston & Thompson, 2003; Martin, 1997, 2000), Oteíza (2003;2009) show that history textbooks try to appear objective, while including a series of judgements. Further, history textbooks analyzed President Allende's supporters and those in favor of the military coup as antagonistic political positions but avoid presenting them in a clear manner, obscuring content through lexico-grammatical choices. Oteíza & Pinto (2008) used the Appraisal system (Martin & White, 2005; P. R. R. White, 2003, 2010) to analyze four history textbooks, two from Chile and two from Spain, and concluded that Spanish and Chilean textbooks include similar strategies to create a conciliatory discourse, for example, avoiding criticism on past events while emphasizing a need to look to the future; creating an idealized portrayal of community; and moving away from assigning responsibility of critical events. These studies stress the importance of reviewing the ideologies presented in history textbooks and the need to provide students with possibilities and information to challenge existing views on the historical events they portray.

Fernández (2017) also analyzes history textbooks but her analysis tests the hypothesis that even though these textbooks have been including more women in their editing process since the 1990s, their discourse is still androcentric. Fernández drew from Appraisal System (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) and analyzed 13 history textbooks of History and Social Sciences that were distributed by the government between 1983-2013. Her work not only used existing judgement categories (Martin & Rose, 2013; Martin & White, 2005) but also expanded the system to include four new categories: Attribute, Contribution, Importance, and Achievement. The author's findings show that there is a clear distinction in how men and women's capacities are presented throughout the textbooks; meanings relating to men and their achievements were inscribed (explicit) in the discourse and associated to attributes and

contributions to knowledge and the country. On the contrary, women's appraisal of capacity was mostly evoked (implicit) and related to Significance and Achievement. Further, women are presented as important figures but their achievements are not mentioned; they are presented as passive social actors, usually the beneficiaries of the actions of third-parties and their evaluations are focused mostly on the fact that they were women not their qualities or contributions to the history of the country.

Moyano (2010) also analyzed history textbooks as well as Biological Sciences ones that are in circulation in Argentina with the purpose of developing teaching strategies in Science and the Humanities. Moyano analyzed the texts (Martin & Rose, 2007) and identified the interaction between ideational and interpersonal meanings that contribute to the construction of ideologies, and how these interactions and discourses vary depending on the genre.

Simpson (2010) also looked at history high school textbooks but in the U.S., with the purpose of indigenous populations were being evaluated in them. Drawing from Appraisal System, (Coffin, 2006; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), Simpson analyzed a small section of a high school history textbook concerning the 1990 events at Wounded Knee, focusing on judgements presented in the text. The author found that the Sioux were being judged negatively and were presented as sick, angry, poor, and holders of weapons they were not willing to surrender. Similar to findings presented by Oteíza (2003, 2009) and Oteíza & Pinto (2008), these textbooks left out important causal information, such as the causes of Sioux's poverty and bad health.

Appraisal has been used to analyze not only textbooks, but also classroom interactions (Achugar, Fernández, & Morales, 2013; Oteíza, Henríquez, & Canelo, 2018). For example, Achugar et al. (2013) analyzed a group interview, which was part of a larger ethnographic study)

to explore the intersections between collective and personal memory in the interactions of Uruguayan teenagers as they talked about the dictatorship in their country. Authors analyzed how youth represented the dictatorship in their discourse and found that they had mainly four ways to explain the dictatorship: as a reaction to guerillas, as authoritarianism, as regional ideological war, and as intolerance. As well, authors analyzed students' subjective positionings (their orientation towards events and social actors); intersubjective positioning (how students negotiated their differences); and intertextual positionings (students' orientation towards other discourses). Authors posit that discourses about the past "are not only received as particular ideational positions, but also as particular expressions of subjective orientations to these ideas and positionings of the speaker him/herself indexing a particular individual and group identity" (2013, p. 283).

Finally, there are some studies that worked with texts and discourses in higher education and academia (Achugar & Pessoa, 2009; Alarcón, 2014; Hood & Martin, 2005; Pascual & Unger, 2009). For example, Alarcón (2014) analyzed the appraisal patterns that were present in a corpus of two academic portfolios of architecture students from one university in Chile and one from Costa Rica. These portfolios, which were similar in format and length, were converted into ASCII to quantify the corpus. Drawing from (2004) and (2000), the authors analyzed the texts and identified a prevalence of appreciation attitudes over judgements and affect among which the most relevant were those related to compositional balance and complexity. These findings are aligned with the type of academic and professional discourse inherent to architecture, a discourse that reveals disposition, configuration, and organization of spaces and materials. This analysis was born out of the need to identify the criteria to create rubrics for evaluating written production in portfolios as well as a need to include a specific description of interpersonal relationships

established between writer and reader of the portfolio that would help identify teachable characteristics for the production of quality portfolios.

Studies in higher education have not only focused on student produced texts but also on understanding their attitudes towards the communities they live in. For example, Achugar & Pessoa (2009) interviewed students of a Graduate Writing Program to explore the role of Spanish in their academic community in Southwest Texas, a linguistically diverse community, characterized by Spanish maintenance and use throughout all areas in life. In this study, authors analyzed interviews with 20 students who were representative of the variety of students' language backgrounds in the program. Drawing from the Appraisal system (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), the authors analyzed the interviews and focused on two areas of evaluation (a) social acceptability and (b) value of language variety and their users'. Findings revealed that even though participants valued Spanish use and bilingualism in academic settings, they had negative attitudes toward local varieties of Spanish and speakers who are monolingual.

Finally, the last two studies dealt with language use in academia. Hood & Martin (2005) explore the role of attitude in academic register. The authors used introductory sections of selected academic work and analyzed the texts (Martin, 2000) to find that academic writers use inscribed positive and negative attitude, especially appreciation, to persuade and align with each other, thus, indirectly evaluating phenomena. As well, they graduate ideational meanings related to investigation so as to keep an underlying objective attitude towards them, allowing researchers to reconcile the apparent contradictory expectations between criticism and objectivity. At the same time, they create a sort of solidarity, as members of the community.

The second study that looked at academic language focused on the use of English. Pascual and Unger (2009) interviewed expert researchers from an Argentinian university who belonged to

three different disciplinary areas. The authors used the Appraisal System (Hood, 2004; Hood & Martin, 2005; Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) to explore researchers' attitudes, values and feelings towards learning and use of English in academia. Authors found that participants recognize the value of having an advanced level of English, while acknowledging their own limitations with it, especially differences in proficiency between their oral and written English. Authors also found that the researchers interviewed recognized colleagues and other members of the publishing circle as both facilitators and obstacles of their own professional development.

The studies reviewed above are just a small sample of studies that have used the Appraisal system to examine evaluations in an educational context. These studies have analyzed textbooks, student-produced materials, classroom discussions, and interview data at different educational levels (P-PS). Even though most studies have drawn from the work of Martin, White, and Rose, these frameworks are not seen as static, and depending on the specific characteristics of the meanings and texts involved in the analysis, authors can expand and modify these, as done, for example, by Fernández (2017). As it can be seen, the Appraisal System offers a rich, systemic theory that allows for application to a wide range of texts.

4.0 Methodology

In this section, I will present the methodology that will guide this study of special-access students' experiences in higher education. I will start explaining how I position myself in terms of this study and what I bring to it. I will then introduce the research questions that guided this investigation, following with a description of my participants and the university chosen as site for this study. Then, I briefly explain the theoretical framework through which I carried out this study. Finally, I present the data sources used and the framework for analysis of the data collected

4.1 Positionality statement

I am a Chilean woman born and raised in a middle-class family in Santiago, Chile. I belong to the first generation in the family to obtain a university degree and the first one to pursue graduate studies. Given my family history and the neighborhood in which I lived most of my life, I have been exposed to the struggles of poverty and the comforts of affluence. Thanks to my parents' hard work, I have only heard stories of economic hardship in the family and thanks to their support and the educational opportunities that I was able to take advantage of, I have been able to gain economic stability.

Education was something my parents always encouraged in my siblings and me, so we all finished high school and attended university. Attending one of the most pluralistic, public universities in the country, the University of Chile, allowed me to see other realities and acknowledge my own privileges. I graduated with a BA in English Language and Linguistics in

2006 and for the following years I worked in several faculties of the university, mostly teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes). I also worked teaching private classes, helping students with international exams such as TOEFL and GMAT. It was this work that led me to know people involved in a project conceived in the Faculty of Economy and Business. This project was looking to provide vocational high-school students with a two-year preparation to enter higher education. I thought this was a wonderful initiative and I worked for one semester in this program and got deeply invested in its cause. Even though I could not continue in the program because I was expected to begin my graduate studies the following semester in the U.S., I kept in touch with staff and administrators of the program.

I have been living in the U.S. for the past five years with my husband, and even though we are far from home, I have always been motivated to focus my studies and research on issues relevant to Chile and Latin America. Given that I am myself a first-generation college student and that I am acquainted, through my work, with the experience of special-access university students, I am deeply motivated to focus my research to better serve these students. I am aware of some of the biases I bring to this research; my history and experiences have shaped and been shaped by my identities as a woman, Chilean, and agnostic. Moreover, it is necessary to acknowledge that my own identities shifted and changed during the time this study took place, due to personal family histories that came to light, which were previously unknown to me. Even though the latter does not directly relate to my participants' journeys, I am aware that my own identity processes and conflicts have had an impact on the analyses carried out in this study and the conclusions drawn. However, it remained my most sincere goal throughout this study to honor students' experiences, voices, and worldviews and produce knowledge that will help inform special-access programs so that they can better serve these students.

4.2 Research questions

In the previous section, I reviewed the literature on the experiences of minority students in higher education, focusing on special-access students in Chile. As well, I reviewed studies who had used the Appraisal System in education. Even though there are some studies that have aimed at analyzing special-access students in higher education, they usually focus on one academic program or just one special-access program. Concerning the analytical and theoretical framework, none of these studies used CDA nor, most specifically, the Appraisal System to analyze students' evaluations of their experiences and the participants involved in them at university. Thus, in order to inform special-access programs and contribute to the literature that focuses on college students' experiences and identities at the university, this study aimed at exploring special-access students' experiences in one public university in Chile.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are special-access students' main reported experiences in higher education?
2. How do these students represent and evaluate their reported experiences in higher education?
3. Based on excerpts from selected official documents and social media posts from special-access programs in this university, how do programs represent and evaluate students?

4.3 Setting: The University of Chile and special-admission programs

The study was conducted at the University of Chile, which is a public university ranked among the top ten universities in Latin America (Times Higher Education, 2018). Founded in

1842, it has been the Alma Mater of 20 presidents and at least two Nobel laureates. During its first years, the university gave considerable support to education, institutional organization, e.g., the creation of the civil code, the building of the interconnected roads throughout the country, among others. Among the core values of the university are its commitment towards the wellbeing of the country; social and gender equity; intellectual, moral and political pluralism; and the conception of education as a public asset and a fundamental social right that contributes to the collective as well as the individual development. Among the most recent examples of its commitment towards inclusion and social justice are the facts that, in May of 2018, the University of Chile became the first in the country to allow transgender students to use their social names for all academic matters (Sepúlveda, 2018) and, in September 2018, it celebrated the graduation of eleven students who were murdered during the dictatorship (Becerra, 2018)⁴.

It is also important to mention that students at the university, at varying degrees depending on the school they attend to, are involved and sometimes lead the public manifestations and riots that demand for a non-profit, non-sexist education and a solution to student debt originated after the dictatorship. This becomes a relevant factor to consider when trying to understand students' day-to-day activities, motivations, and social justice awareness. For example, several schools of the University of Chile (from which some of my participants are) are located downtown, where most protests take place. When walking by downtown's main avenue and nearby streets, it is common to see manifestations, signs demanding the release of incarcerated political activists or promoting future manifestations. As well, as protests usually involve police display, few students

⁴ The Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, in 2011, also held a symbolic act of graduation of students and faculty who were killed or were missing and never found during the Pinochet civil-military dictatorship. These students and faculty members also received honorary degrees.

attending universities located downtown are unfamiliar with the effects of tear gas and alternative bus stops when streets are barricaded or closed.

Participation in public manifestations and riots also affects academic life in different ways depending on the schools. Usually, humanist, social sciences and art schools tend to be the most involved in manifestations, impacting these students' classes, which usually end up being cancelled, sometimes for months at a time. This is because there is a complete cease of academic activities, situation that it is supported, or at least, honored, by faculty and administrators. Usually, this cease of activities also impacts the academic year for these students, who usually need to stay during the summer months to make up for lost classes. However, in schools such as the Faculty of Business and Economics, classes are not necessarily cancelled during massive protests and students might agree to support the demands of the collective but the impact in their academic life is minimal; students maintain their class and evaluation schedule intact, and attendance is made more flexible to allow for students to participate in manifestations if they wish. Thus, it is clear that even though the university acknowledges and supports some of the regional and local sociopolitical issues currently taking place in the country, student involvement will depend on several factors, among them, the school they attend.

The current study focuses on three special-admission programs that the university offers: the EDT, Escuela de Talentos [School of Talents]; PACE, Programa de Acompañamiento y Acceso Efectivo a la Educación Superior [Supportive and Effective Access to Higher Education]; and SIPEE, Sistema Prioritario de Equidad Educativa [System of Priority Access of Educational Equity]. The first special admission program mentioned, the EDT, is a pilot project that was founded in 2013 in the Economics and Business Faculty (FEN) of the University of Chile. This free college preparatory program offers a 2-year curriculum for whom they describe as “talented

students” from technical-professional (also known as vocational, in older research) schools who want to gain access to the university but do not have the means nor the qualifications to do so. To fulfill its mission, the EDT opens the doors of the University of Chile twice a week, (about 40 hrs./month) to these talented high school students in their junior and senior years in technical schools. Based on their selection criteria, “talent” seems to be measured considering students’ academic performance, teachers’ perception of the students’ abilities in the classroom, and, their willingness to commit to hard work and ability to persevere when faced with adversity (which are assessed through a series of interviews with the administration). This description of “talent” will be later discussed in the document analysis. During the two years this program lasts, teachers and tutors rigorously prepare students for higher education with after-school language and math classes, the areas known to be their weakest. As well, students receive psychological support and guidance throughout this process (Facultad de Economía y Negocios, n.d.).

The second special-admission program, SIPEE, was created in 2012 in the School of Social Sciences. SIPEE is a program that allows students who graduated from excelling public schools to access higher education despite not having obtained the required minimum scores in the university general admission test. In order to qualify for SIPEE, students must come from families whose earnings are within the first three quintiles, have coursed their four years in high school in public schools, and have an average of 5.5 points (over a maximum of 7) in their high school grades during their first three years in high school (University of Chile, 2018).

The third special-admission program, PACE, is a government-sponsored program that started in May 2014, working with seven thousand students in their junior year in high school and five universities, including the University of Chile. The purpose of the program is to offer students’ academic preparation to enter university, vocational orientation, and socioemotional support

through higher education. Currently, PACE is working with more than 84 thousand students in their junior or senior year in high school and 29 higher education institutions, both institutes and universities. Eligibility requirements for this special-access program are to be enrolled in a high school currently collaborating with PACE, take the general university admission test, and be among the best 15 percent of their senior-year cohort. Once enrolled in the program and after their high school graduation, students are given a PACE score, with which they are eligible to compete for a place in one of their first ten program preferences in participating universities. This score is composed of 80 percent of their ranking score (score that considers the educational context of the student i.e., how the student did in comparison with the school's performance in the past few years, among other variables) and 20 percent of the grade average of their four years in high school. Special bonus points are given considering attendance, career preference, and territory (adding a 7 percent to students who graduated from a high school located in the metropolitan region and a 3.5 percent to students in the central regions and zero percent to those of the remaining regions) (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

These programs briefly described above have been allotted a specific enrollment quota in the University of Chile from the total number of admitted students. In the case of PACE, the government program, there is one slot reserved for PACE students in every school of the University of Chile, with some exceptions (some priority areas, such as pedagogy, have received higher enrollment quotas). SIPEE, on the other hand, is by far the program that reserves the highest quota at this university, with 500 admission spots, according to their updated 2019 enrollment information. The EDT, as it begins to enroll students when they are in their junior year in high school, functions in a different way. The EDT enrolls about 60 students in their junior year annually. Once students successfully graduate from the program and high school, provided they

get a minimum score (below national standards) in the university admission test, they are guaranteed a place in one of the programs within their school. However, throughout the years, they have also created enrollment quotas through a collaboration with the bachelor's program in this university.

It is important to add that, despite the fact that these programs help students who otherwise would have had a hard time entering university based on their results on the university admission test or economic condition (Perez Núñez, 2020), these programs go through a strict selection process; as it is explained in the paragraphs above, the University of Chile, as most universities do, allocate small enrollment quotas to these programs, making them very competitive and, sometimes, very difficult to obtain.

4.4 Data sources

For this study, I used three main data sources to answer the research questions presented above. These different sources allowed me to examine competing explanations and discrepancies in the data (Maxwell, 2013). Following Table 8 below, the data sources for this study are: (a) an online survey, (b) interviews, and (c) official documents from three special-access programs. As Table 8 shows, data sources selected for this study are organized as providing general or specific information to answer the research questions presented earlier.

Table 8 Study Design: Data sources and framework for analysis

Type of data	Data Source	Research Question addressed	Framework for analysis	
			First Level	Second Level
General	Survey	RQ 1	Inform interviews, used to compare/contrast data	Appraisal (only for descriptions)
Specific	Interviews	RQ 1, 2	Thematic analysis	CDA, SFL (Appraisal, Transitivity)
	Programs' official docs	RQ 3		

RQ1	What are the main issues and challenges in the higher education experiences discussed by the students in these programs?
RQ2	How do these students represent and evaluate their reported experiences in higher education?
RQ3	Based on excerpts from selected official documents and social media posts from special-access programs in this university, how do programs represent and evaluate students?

First, I conducted an online survey that asked students to provide demographic information such as their current studies (career, school within the university they attend, family educational background, special admission program they enrolled in) and their experiences in higher education (please refer to Appendix B1 for survey protocol). Most of the information gathered was in a multiple-choice format with some text entry options to allow participants to share their own thoughts on some issues.

Second, I conducted interviews to obtain more specific information to answer the research question one and two. Concerning interviews, I conducted two interviews per participant; The first interview was an in-depth semi-structured (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) conversational interview aimed at building rapport with the participants and expanding on the survey, thus obtaining much more in-depth information about the students' context and sociocultural history. In this first interview, participants addressed general issues related to their studies and experiences at home, school and university but touched on more specific topics such as possible academic struggles, adjusting to

the university life, differences between school and university life, socializing in and out of the university, among others (Please refer to Appendix B.2 for Interview 1 protocol). The second interview fed off of the first one and asked participants to narrate, or elaborate on, specific events and stories mentioned in the first interview that relate to their experiences at the university (Please refer to Appendix B.3 for a reference of interview 2 protocol). Interviews with all six participants took place during the first semester of the 2019 academic year in Chile (academic year typically being from March-December).

Third, I collected documents and information from the programs on social media (mostly Facebook). These were collected with the aim of understanding how the different programs represent students in the academic community and how they describe the involvement of the programs within the university's overarching goals⁵.

4.5 Timeline of the study

As shown in Figure 4 below, this study took place during the Spring semester of 2019 (the first months of the Chilean 2019 school year). Initial IRB proposal was obtained in March 2019, with further modifications approved during overview defense.

⁵ Following a recent “public transparency” law implemented a few years ago in Chile, all public institutions, this university included, need to make publicly available all documents regarding their programs and the faculty and personnel working in them (salaries, years of service, etc.). As well, public institutions have to make available official documentation about all programs; however, given that this information is available but not necessarily easily accessible as it is a measure being implemented, in a previous meeting with the provost at this university, she offered to provide all documents that might be needed, upon request.

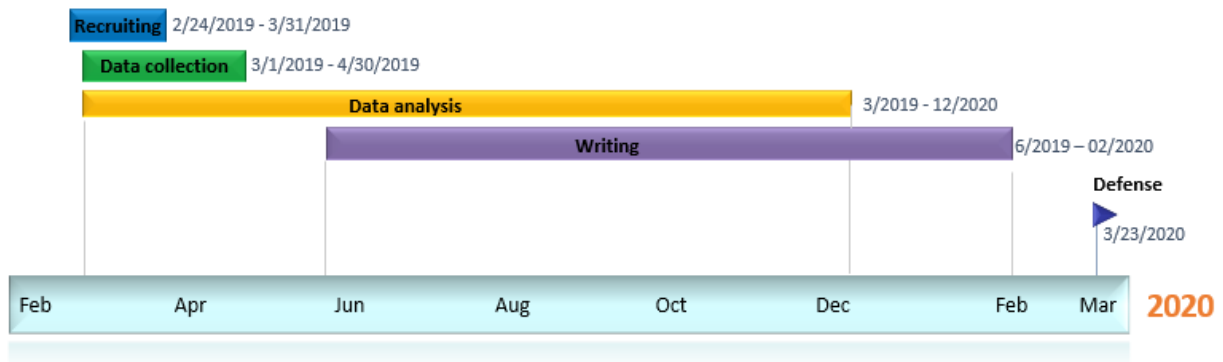


Figure 4 Project design timeline

Participants were recruited starting late February and data was collected from March to April 2019. The latter took into consideration that January and February constitute summer vacations for most students, restricting the possibility of collecting data during those months. As analysis started and extended through data collection, these data were analyzed between March to December 2019, leaving part of the Summer and Fall semester of 2019 for writing.

4.6 Data analysis

According to Wilson (1986), the quantitative perspective in research centers on the objectivity of the social structure and in the transparency of the manifestations. On the other hand, the qualitative perspective in research emphasizes the contextual dependency of meaning over the remaining aspects of action. These two aspects are complementary, and in fact, their combination,

what has been named mixed methods, has been gaining ground in different areas of research. There are different approaches to mixed-methods designs; for this study, the main purpose was to understand special-access students' experiences in higher education, and following a theoretical framework that gives language a central place in the production and reproduction of the social world, I decided to make central the qualitative aspect of this study. I knew that in order to emphasize depth over extension (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001), I had to have a smaller sample of participants given time constraints, and I thought interviews with special-access students from different programs were a good choice to fulfill this goal. However, I also wanted to obtain a more extensive sample that would gather experiences of a more varied sample but including discrete data. This would serve to inform the findings at the more in-depth qualitative level, and for this purpose I developed a survey that targeted a wider sample of students from these special-access programs as well as general admission students. The latter allowed me to, even if only at an exploratory level, compare and contrast results from interviews. Thus, I decided to conduct a descriptive, content-driven analysis (as opposed to a hypothesis-driven analysis) in which codes and themes would be deriving from the data, not from the generated hypothesis (Guest et al., 2014).

As mentioned, the main purpose of this study was to understand students' experiences in higher education; what are the main issues they have to deal with, their successes, the resources they have at hand that are useful and the ones that are missing and are deemed necessary. In the following sub-sections I present how I created and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study, organized by data source.

4.6.1 Analysis of the survey data

I created the survey information to get a feel for students' backgrounds and to obtain a general understanding of some of the issues they had to deal with on a daily basis. The survey consisted of three main parts, (1) a section that asked for general demographic information, (2) a second section that requested students to evaluate the challenges they experienced during their higher education journeys, and (3) a final section that asked students to type into text boxes brief descriptions of their classmates, friends, workload and professors.

To analyze the data collected in the first two parts of the survey, I conducted descriptive statistical analyses using Excel and presented findings in tabular and graphical forms. To analyze the written responses obtained via the open-ended questions in the third part of the survey, I turned to SFL's Appraisal System; even though students responded to the request to describe these entities ranged from one word, (usually adjectives and nouns) to short phrases, I knew it would give me a general idea of how students perceived friends, classmates, professors and workload. These evaluations, in turn, would help me begin to understand whether and how the roles these entities played in their experiences and the power relations between them affected their experiences at university. Through Appraisal, I was able to get an understanding of what could be key relevant issues that could be further explored in the interviews, which were evidently much richer in content. A more thorough explanation of how the appraisal analysis was conducted is included in the following section.

In general, the survey only provided general information to inform my study, and I was also able to better understand special-access students as a population, compared to general-admission students. This will be further explained at the end of the survey findings sections, in chapter five.

4.6.2 Analysis of interviews

4.6.2.1 Thematic analysis

While surveys were conceived to gather mostly background information and data that would serve to further inform main findings, interviews were designed to explore participants main experiences, and their perceptions on such experiences, allowing me to answer questions 1 and 2. A thematic analysis focuses “on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (Guest et al., 2014, p. 9). In this type of analysis, codes are usually developed and represent the themes that have been identified and applied to the data as summary markers that will be later used for analysis. Analysis can take several forms and may include comparing code frequency, identifying co-occurrence of codes and/or displaying relationships between codes graphically (Guest et al., 2014). In this study, I analyze data relying mostly on comparisons of code frequencies and using graphic representations to show relationships between codes.

Furthermore, I conceive of interviews as an interactional event and as social practice where meanings are co-constructed. Following De Fina (2019), I approach interviews as an event where interviewer and interviewee are faced with delicate positioning issues; an event where factors such as the identity of those involved in the interview, its topic, the immediate (and wider social) context in which it takes place, all have an impact on the way this event develops, a fact that cannot be ignored (p.21). Thus, as in any other conversational exchange, there was a co-construction of the ideas expressed and a negotiation of meanings and positionings (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 2008; Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

By looking at interviews, I aimed to answer research question one: What are special-access students’ main reported experiences in higher education? To achieve this, I condensed the data (M.

B. Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) obtained through interviews by focusing on the what students mentioned as situations they encountered at university that could potentially hinder or help their journeys at university. For example, some students mentioned resources that helped them in class (access to computer labs, books, scientific calculators) or that were useful to develop skills and deal with specific challenges (psychological therapy, academic skills workshops). Further, some other students mentioned issues surrounding resources mostly due to lack of them or difficulty accessing them. This made me realize that experiences, for the most part, were seen partly as challenging and partly as positive. Only in a few cases, experiences were distinctly categorized as a challenge throughout interviews, but for most of them, students' answers navigated between the positive and challenging aspects of their experiences at university.

Based on this distinction of positive and challenging experiences at university, and of course, on students' own definitions of what a student should do and be like to be successful at university, I was able to distinguish experiences that helped them in different ways to be successful at university and accomplish their personal and professional goals, and in other cases, issues that hindered these goals. It is important to point out that given that experiences were interpreted as challenging or positive based on my perceptions and interactions with students during the interview, I decided to check these impressions and interpretations and I contacted participants for member-checking (M. B. Miles et al., 2014). For this, I summarized the main findings from each interview under the two main categories used: challenging and positive experiences. I also reminded participants that they were free and invited to make any comments and annotations to these findings. Information was sent individually by mail to each participant and, three out of the six students interviewed replied.

Going back to the coding of experiences, in some cases, the same student experienced both positive experiences and challenges surround one issue, so for each time a student mentioned an issue, I described the experience using three codes that worked at different levels; one higher-level code that identified whether the student expressed this issue to be *challenging* or *positive*. Then I used a middle-level code that briefly synthesized the main nature of the issue, e.g., whether it was *academic*, relating to their *quality of life*, to the availability or access of *school resources*, *social*, or relating to *family* or the *home*. These categories were born after going through the interviews several times and seeing patterns and clustering them into different categories than informed my coding (M. B. Miles et al., 2014). Given that there were differences among what could be considered as, for example, *academic*, I added a third level of coding, and used this lower-level codes to add to the description of experiences. For example, experiences coded as *challenging* and *academic*, also were marked using codes such as *assignments*, *asking questions*, *English*, *evaluations*, *professors*, *schedule*, *workload*, etc. according to what students mentioned in the interviews. Figures 5 and 6 show a graphical representation of the different levels of coding used.

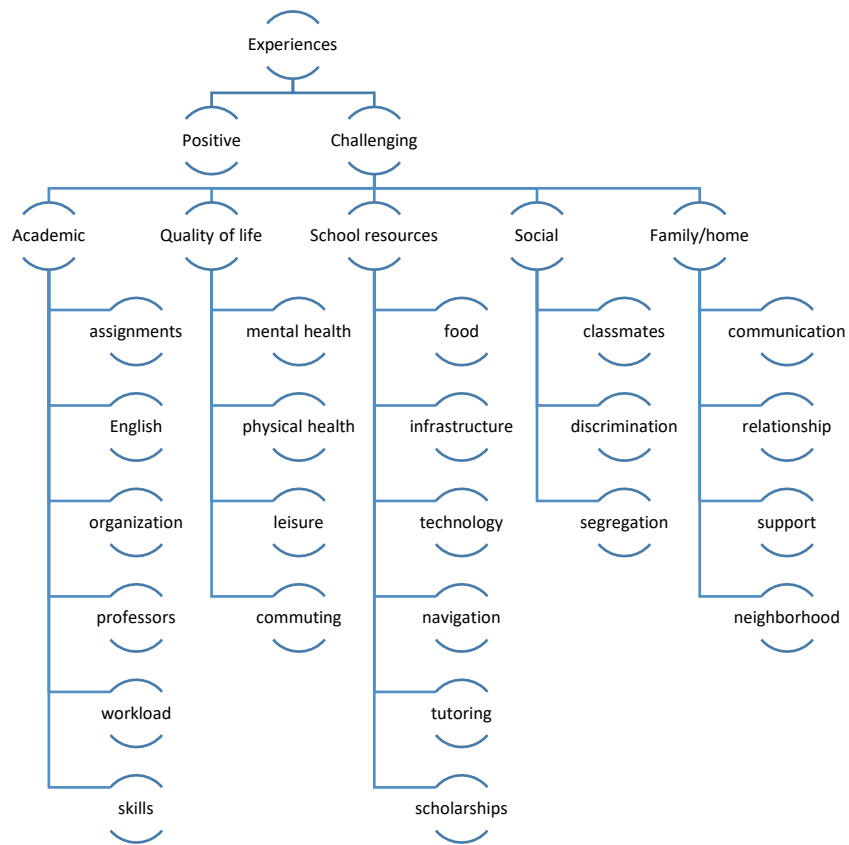


Figure 5 Diagram of three-level coding for challenging experiences

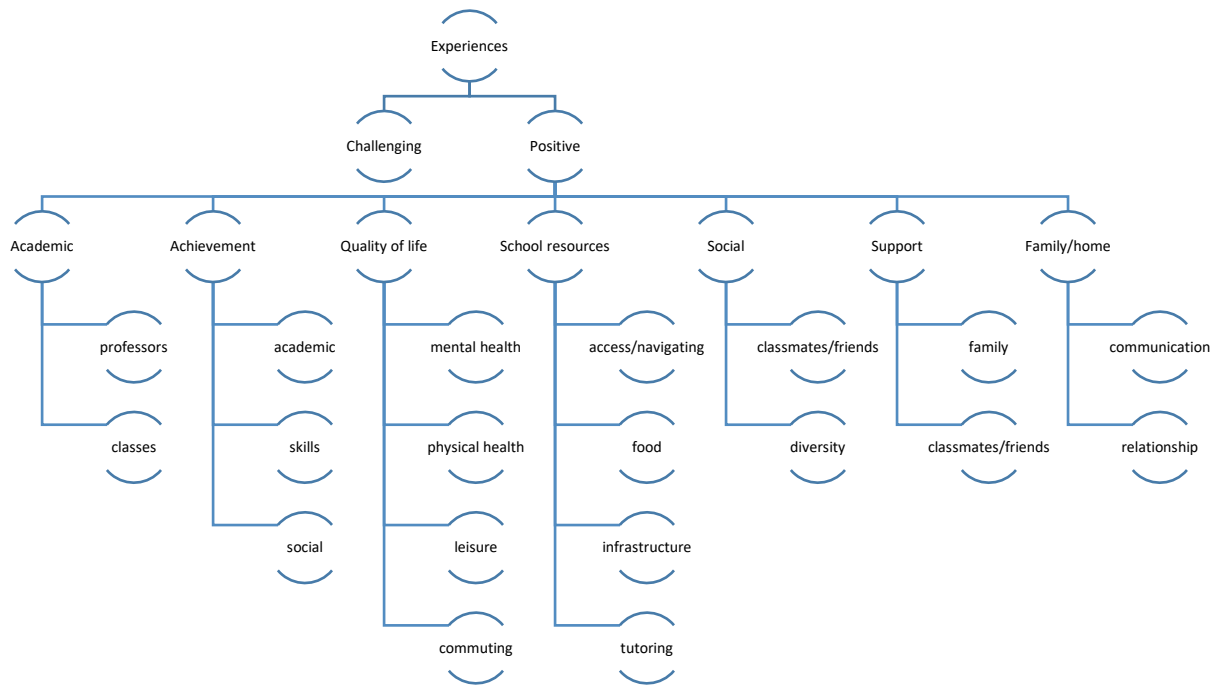


Figure 6 Diagram of three-level coding for positive experiences in interviews

The three-level coding structure allowed me to be more specific with the types of challenges and positive experiences students went through, but at the same time showed me how interrelated all these issues are, because codes easily overlapped. To account for overlapping, I decided to use the third level for informing my analysis and description of challenging and positive experiences, but frequencies (which will be presented later in the findings section) were only presented to the second level. Please refer to Appendix D for a detailed description of each of the codes mentioned above, for both positive and challenging experiences.

In terms of the unit being coded in the interviews for this thematic analysis, I mostly used turns of talk, and each coded instance included from one to several turns, depending on the number of turns during which the issues were discussed. Thus, I would assign a single code to a section of

the interview that could include question(s) done by me, the answer of the participant, and any relevant follow-up question(s) and answer(s) that further explained the issue. If the participant added a new perspective on the issue, for example, they discussed a challenge navigating mental health resources in their school, but then they particularly mentioned how the difficulty of not being able to get regular appointment with counselors was having an impact in their life, this would have been coded as two separate instances. The first one as *challenge, school resources, mental health* and the second one as *challenge, quality of life, mental health*, respectively.

Once the codes were tallied, I identified the main categories and I began comparing and contrasting the results by programs and by participants to understand how these coded experiences were distributed (M. B. Miles et al., 2014). At this point, I identified the most important challenging and positive experiences based on number of codes per category and went back to the data to review the instances that were coded under these categories. The latter allowed me to conduct a thematic analysis focusing on the details that students included in the reporting of these experiences and to draw some conclusions on what were important aspects affecting students experience at university. However, while conducting this analysis it was clear that there was more, nuanced information in the interviews both at the interpersonal and ideational level that would allow me to understand in a better way how these experiences are perceived and expressed as challenging and/or as positive and to make connections between categories that the content analysis had not allowed me to. This part of the analysis will be explained in more detail in the following section.

4.6.2.2 Discourse analysis

According to Forni, Gallart, & Vasilachis (1992) language is at the same time a resource and a construction, a form of reproducing and producing the social world. Following Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Transitivity and Appraisal Systems), I was able to obtain more nuanced information about how participants construe and evaluate their experiences at university, and the ideologies and power relations behind these representations. Thus, I decided to conduct a linguistic analysis using the data of two participants, Katya and Emily, to answer research question two: How do these students represent and evaluate their reported experiences in higher education? I chose these two participants for a couple of reasons. First, Katya and Emily had gone through similar situations and they had similar profiles i.e., they both had to relocate to the capital city to study, they both gained access to university through PACE and they have both expressed issues with mental health and were seeking professional help. However, their experiences obtaining help, relocating, and, in general, at university, have been starkly different. At this point, I think it would be relevant to go back to the conceptualization of experience mentioned in section 3, the literature review. Following the concept of *perezhivanie* and this unified notion of personal and situational characteristics in a lived experiences, similar situations can be interpreted, perceived and experienced or lived by different people in different ways (Vygotsky, 1994). So even though Katya and Emily shared several characteristics and went through similar situations (need to access university resources) their experiences were lived in completely different ways. The thematic analysis only allows me to understand part of the differences in these students' experience; in order to dig deeper into the factors/actors that played an important role in their specific situations, is that I decided to take a look at how Katya and Emily constructed their lived experiences in their discourses (Transitivity System) and how they evaluated themselves, others and these lived experiences (Appraisal System).

Additionally, considering the amount of data I had, I realized it was not feasible to conduct a full analysis using CDA and SFL of the complete sample. Therefore, I chose depth over quantity and while going through the data and making preliminary analyses, these two participants contrasting experiences came up as a compelling case for analysis. Therefore, to better understand these differences in Katya and Emily's experiences and their evaluations of these experiences, I decided to further study these differences at the semantic (Appraisal) and lexico-grammatical level (Transitivity). Even though for this analysis I used only part of the data, it provided useful insights that complemented my overall results at the thematic level.

Furthermore, within Systemic Functional Linguistics, I drew from the Transitivity System because, as it was stated in the theoretical framework, according to Systemic Functional Linguistics, meanings at different levels are interrelated, occur simultaneously and can be found fused together in linguistic units. This system allowed me to understand how students were constructing experience through discourse, more specifically, who were the key actors or participants in these experiences, and what were the processes and circumstances associated to these. For this analysis, I drew theoretical notions from several works (Achugar et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2004; Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2013; Martin & White, 2005; Oteíza, 2017).

As mentioned before, I also drew from the Appraisal System for this analysis. This system provides a "comprehensive theoretical and descriptive systematization of the linguistic resources that can be used to construe the value of social experience" (Oteíza, 2017, p. 458), in this case, of these students in higher education. Further, one of the functions of evaluation, as mentioned by Hunston & Thompson (2003), is to express a speaker's (or writer's) opinion, which in turn reflects the value system of that speaker and of their community. In this way, through the Transitivity System I was able to understand who were the key actors and participants students used in

constructing their experiences through discourse, and through the Appraisal System I was able to analyze how these participants (themselves, professors, the programs, classmates, family, among others) are being evaluated.

At the same time, through the critical analysis of students' linguistic choices using CDA, I aimed at uncovering the ideologies that laid behind the evaluations made by these students, their beliefs about university and its entities, and their roles in higher education. Thus, analyzing these ideologies through CDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012; T. A. van Dijk, 1993) allowed to add a richer understanding of special-access students' expectations and needs, and what could be some particular aspects that institutions can focus on to improve their experiences in higher education.

For the procedural steps of the analysis, I mostly followed Macken-Horarik & Isaac (2014) with some modification for the purposes of my study. As Macken-Horarik and Isaac (2014) mention, "evaluation is both everywhere and -at its most powerful- invisible" (p.67). So, in order to conduct an analysis that depends on aspects that can be highly subjective, context-dependent, and explicitly or implicitly present in the text analyzed, evaluation needs to be approached systematically. To this end and for this particular study, I adapted the methodology suggested by these authors, which was originally meant for narrative analysis, to interview analysis.

In this study, as mentioned, I considered interviews as an interactional encounter (De Fina & Perrino, 2011), a social practice that takes place between an interviewer -an alumna of this university and also the researcher- and an interviewee -the students- who interact and position themselves and others throughout the interview (Davies & Harré, 1990). In total, four interviews, two with each participant, are considered for this analysis, which took place during the months of March and April of 2019. In SFL terms, the field of this encounter would be an exchange in which I, the interviewer and researcher, contacted special-access students through a common

acquaintance and asked them to participate in a research study to better understand their experiences in higher education with the purpose of informing special-access programs. In terms of tenor, the students' included in this part of the analysis are two students who self-identified as female and who entered university through the PACE program (more details on the participants is provided in section 5.2.3, in Findings). I had the role of interviewer and primary researcher in this study and I identified myself to students as an alumna from University of Chile and a graduate student at a university abroad. The latter, added to age difference, and the fact that students accepted being audio-recorded, might have played a role in students' linguistic choices as we engaged in the interview. As well, my linguistic choices and those of the interview protocol adapted as we negotiated identities as students (former student in my case) of the same institution. Finally, concerning mode, from the total of four interviews that this part of the analysis used as corpus, three were carried out face-to-face and one was done by using a private messaging app. For the face-to-face interviews, I met with the students at coffee shops that were near the campuses these students attend, and for the second interview with Katya, we decided to use voice messages because we had a hard time scheduling a meeting face-to-face. During our first interview, Katya seemed very affected by the lack of response from the university in relation to her concerns; she looked sad and worried about how all these problems might affect her academic work. When discussing how much she had been waiting to access mental health resources at the university, I was able to see she was affected by this issue. This, added to the fact that Katya had a complicated schedule given that she had to commute long hours to get to her parents' house, we decided to use private messaging with voice recording for the second interview.

Once interviews with all participants were finished, I carried out the semantic and lexicogrammatical analysis. For this analysis, interviews were transcribed, and information was placed

in an excel sheet, using different rows for every turn in conversation. This allowed me to have direct access to specific turns and how these were annotated by using a simple pivot table and inputting sort commands. Given that the purpose of this part of the analysis was to understand students' feelings towards the experiences they reported in higher education, within Appraisal, I mostly used Attitude, thus focusing on semantic areas of emotions (Affect), ethics (Judgement), and aesthetics (Appreciation).

Following Macken-Horarik & Isaac's method, I approached the texts to be analyzed -the four different interviews transcribed-, by first identifying explicit choices (inscribed meanings) of attitude (affect, judgment, and appreciation). These explicit choices were color-coded. I realized that sometimes annotated segments overlapped, but this did not prove to be a major complication since this was the first level of annotations. For each annotated segment, I identified the Appraised entities, the Appraiser and the Loading (whether the evaluations where positive or negative). I created different columns for each semantic area within Affect, thus allowing for certain segments to be coded in more than one area simultaneously. When the same turn had more than one instance of evaluation with different Appraised entities and/or Appraiser, I duplicated the text in the following row and included the new annotations (an example showing how this looked in the spreadsheet is provided towards the end of this section)

Once stages and instances of inscribed affect were annotated in all documents, I began annotating implicit choices of attitude (invoked meanings), which were marked with a "t" (Martin & White, 2005). At this point, I worked with a second annotator; I trained someone who had linguistic background, had already conducted discourse analysis and who has been involved with the academic community at this particular university in similar ways to my own to check for inter-annotator agreement (Read & Carroll, 2012). I used the data from the survey, which included very

short excerpts of data, to test for coding agreement and after two tests on which both of us annotated a set of answers, we arrived at 81% of reliability. For the interviews, I followed a similar procedure and we checked each other's annotations, discussing our disagreements and, finally, arriving to consensus 100% of the time.

Together with annotating invoked instances of attitude, I also included annotations for graduation resources that were used to lower or raise the force of evaluations or to diffuse or sharpen the focus of evaluations (Kaplan, 2004). I made notes on a separate column to include any relevant aspects in students' evaluations concerning their representation of participants, processes and circumstances. It is important to mention that even though interviews were audio-recorded, in this analysis, which was meant to be exploratory, I did not include intonation or any other speech marker other than long pauses (more than three seconds) and words that were emphasized, usually by using louder speech (based on contrast with the rest of the interview). A more detailed account of all annotations and their descriptors can be found in Appendix F.

Finally, once all annotations were made, I identified patterns of evaluations within and across interviews, and calculated frequencies of evaluations per attitude type and participant, and per loading. An example of how the analysis was conducted including some of the annotations mentioned can be found in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Example of Appraisal analysis matrix and annotations

Text	Appraised entity	Appraiser	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Notes
(a) sí, no es como que, claro, como que eso me gusta mucho , porque ha sido una gran ayuda porque cualquier duda que yo tenga yo sé que puedo ir y ellas me pueden ayudar, o me pueden averiguar si no sé cómo hacerlo	Univ. Resources/ staff	Emily	hap*	t, +tent t, +cap		Univ. Resources represented as “gran ayuda” (identifier) through rel. process
(b) y que igual te distraen mucho de lo que tenís que hacer	mental issues at univ.	Katya	t, unhap		t, -val	
(b) y que igual te distraen mucho de lo que tenís que hacer	self (in relation to mental issues at univ.)	Katya		t, -cap (she’s not able to fulfill her duties)		

- (a) [yes, it isn’t like, right, like I like that a lot, because it has been a great help, because any doubt I have, I know I can go and they can help me, or they can ask if I don’t know how to do it]
 (b) [And that they kind of distract you from what you have to do]

It is important to mention that even though I annotated systematically all instances of affect and graduation in the transcripts, in the findings and conclusion sections, I only included annotations that were relevant to the main points being addressed in each of the excerpts presented. Furthermore, I acknowledge that engagement is an important aspect of the Appraisal System and it also became very relevant as I analyzed the interviews. However, because of space constraints, I had to limit the analysis and decided to focus on Attitude and some resources of Graduation, and only made passing comments on Engagement as it became relevant in the different excerpts included.

The final analytical task involved the document analysis and answered question three: how do programs represent and evaluate students? Once the main issues expressed by students were

identified, I went through official documents (official websites, internal documents to which I had access, legal documents of the creation of the programs) and through the programs' social media posts (mainly Facebook). Then, I selected extracts for each of the programs that (1) included representations and evaluations of the programs themselves and their roles within the university, and (2) included representations and evaluations of the students they aimed to serve. I selected a total of six documents and 19 extracts and analyzed them using Appraisal and Critical Discourse Analysis in a similar fashion to the one described above for interviews. More detail on the types of documents and extracts selected can be found in Chapter 5, Findings.

Once all data was analyzed, I organized main findings by source and research question they aimed to answer to triangulate main conclusions (M. B. Miles et al., 2014) with the purpose of identifying possible overlaps or contradictions that may have arisen.

5.0 Findings from the survey analysis

This section discusses the main findings from the online survey of the University of Chile students in special-admission programs. As mentioned in the methods section, the purpose of the survey was to get demographic information and an overall notion of what were the experiences of a sample of students at university, to later use this information to inform the more in-depth data gathered from the interviews.

I used convenience sampling and contacted school administrators I knew to help me reach students. I shared a survey with professors and administrators in different schools at the university so that they could share it with their students. I was able to recruit 59 students to complete the survey, of which 54 complied with the requirements to participate: be over 18, be enrolled as a regular student at the university and be at least in the second year in their programs. The latter was to account for any school-to-university transition issues that might be attributable to all students regardless of type of admission. In the following sections I present student demographics and participation of students in special-admission programs.

5.1 Descriptive statistics: Student demographics and special-admission program participation

As survey links were sent to students regardless of the way in which they accessed university for convenience purposes, the sample includes both general admission and special

admission students. As Table 10 below shows, a total of 54 students completed the survey of whom 24 were admitted through general admission and 30 through special admission.

Table 10 Student demographics across admission program type

Variables	(1) Full sample	(2) General admission students	(3) Special admission students
Age:			
18-20	15 (28%)	3 (13%)	12 (40%)
21-23	31 (57%)	18 (75%)	13 (43%)
24-29	6 (11%)	1 (4%)	5 (17%)
30+	2 (4%)	2 (8%)	-
Gender:			
Female	34 (63%)	15 (63%)	19 (63%)
Male	19 (35%)	9 (38%)	10 (33%)
Genderqueer	1 (2%)	-	1 (3%)
Parent 1, no higher education	35 (65%)	15 (63%)	20 (69%)*
Parent 1, higher education	19 (35%)	9 (38%)	9 (31%)*
Parent 2, no higher education	28 (65%)*	9 (47%)*	19 (79%)*
Parent 2, higher education	15 (35%)*	10 (53%)*	5 (21%)*
First-generation students	24 (45%)*	8 (33%)	16 (67%)
Admission program:			
Regular admission	24 (44%)	17 (100%)	-
EDT	8 (15%)	-	8 (27%)
PACE	4 (7%)	-	4 (13%)
SIPEE	18 (33%)	-	18 (60%)
Year of study:			
Second year	13 (24%)	4 (17%)	9 (30%)
Third year	12 (22%)	5 (21%)	7 (23%)
Fourth year	18 (33%)	13 (54%)	5 (17%)
Fifth+ year	11 (20%)	2 (8%)	9 (30%)
School:			
Architecture and urbanism	1 (2%)	-	1 (3%)
Sciences	1 (2%)	1 (4%)	-
Physical Sciences and Math	13 (24%)	1	12 (40%)
Chemistry and Pharmacy	1 (2%)	-	1 (3%)
Social Sciences	2 (4%)	1 (4%)	1 (3%)
Business and Economics	27 (50%)	17 (71%)	10 (33%)
Philosophy and Humanities	3 (6%)	-	3 (10%)
Medicine	6 (11%)	4 (17%)	2 (7%)
Total:	54	24	30

Note: * marks incomplete data (not all participants answered this question)

The age of the respondents ranges from 18 till over 30, being the majority between 18 and 23 years old (83%). In both, the full sample and the subsamples across admission category status, female students constitute more than half of the respondents.

Parental education attainment is lower for special-admission students in the sample with 69% reporting highest educational level was high school or lower for parent 1 (contrasted with 63% for general admission students) and 79% for parent 2 (contrasted with 47%). Further, almost half of the respondents (45%) had neither of their parents attained a higher education degree (complete or incomplete). From these first-generation students, a third (33%) corresponds to general admission students, and two thirds (67%), to special admission students. Thus, almost a third of special admission students are not first-generation students. This strengthens a point developed further in a later section concerning diversity within special-admission students. Moreover, this may also point to factors other than type of admission, such as social class, and sociocultural background as possibly relevant to help explain students' lived experiences in higher education

Next, Table 10 shows the breakdown of students across admission type. The general admission subsample consists of 24 students, while the special admission subsample is constituted by 30 students, including eight students enrolled through EDT (27%), four through PACE (13%), and 18 through SIPEE (60%). The distribution of special admission students answering the survey is consistent with the distribution of actual number of students in these programs, being SIPEE by far the program that most recruits and enrolls students in the university.

When looking at years of university, students in the full sample and the special admission sample are approximately evenly distributed between 2 and 5+ years, while in the general admission subsample, more than half of the students are in their fourth year at the university. Table

10 also shows the distribution of students across eight different schools within University of Chile. The majority of the students in the general admission subsample were enrolled in the School of Economics and Business (71%), and the rest attend the School of Medicine, Sciences, Social Sciences. In the special admission subsample, the two most popular schools are Physical Sciences and Mathematics (40%) and Economics and Business (33%). The remaining special-admission students are somewhat evenly distributed across the remaining schools, excluding the School of Sciences. It is important to note that these schools are spread throughout the city and even though they respond to the main office in terms of administration, each has particular sources of funding and resources depending on their own collaborations, which translates in stark differences concerning student experiences depending on the school they were from, as it was informed by interviews.

Concerning more general demographic information about students who responded to the survey, only two out of the 54 was not Chilean. None of the students interviewed had children and most of them (83%) lived with direct family (such as parents, siblings, grandparents). Concerning the students' place of residence, most students (90.74%) surveyed live in the capital city, Santiago, in 11 out of the 35 existing boroughs, some of which are relatively far away from their schools, increasing commuting times; 39% of the students surveyed mentioned that it takes them over an hour to commute from home to school and 35% reported taking between 30-60 minutes. Most of the students (38%) use the metro or train (those living farther away), while about a third (34%) mentioned taking the bus or an intercity train. These commuting times are used by some students to study, read, and sometimes sleep, when they have the chance to sit. As it will be mentioned later in the interviews, commuting is an important factor that plays a relevant role in the students' lives, in their mental and physical health, but one that also affects their socialization, because it either

hinders or promotes social and academic interactions. For example, students living close to downtown or the boroughs to the south of the capital will unlikely join classmates who live in affluent boroughs to the east during weekend outings, because it will entail a commute of sometimes 1.5 hours one-way, in a rather unreliable public transportation system. A similar situation happens when students form study groups, which are more likely to take place between students who live nearby, adding restrictions to the social activities that take place around academic activities.

5.2 Reported physical and mental health, motivation and social life

Students were asked to use a Likert scale (five-point scale ranging from “no problems” to “too many problems”) to report on their physical and mental health, their motivation and social life during their first and current year at the university (please refer to Appendix B1 for the survey protocol and specific format of this survey question). Students, in general, reported improvement from first to current year at the university in all aspects, with some difference between special and general admission students. Figure 7 groups answers from the five-point Likert scale into three major groups, thus comparing students who reported having no or almost no problems, students who reported having few problems and students who reported having several or too many problems. Most students reported having no/almost no issues in their social life and physical health during their first year and, showing some minor improvements in their current year, with no difference concerning admission type. Nevertheless, for mental health and motivation, there are some interesting differences. Figure 7 and 8 below show the main trends for students in these two aspects. Please refer to Appendix C for a detailed account of students’ self-assessment.

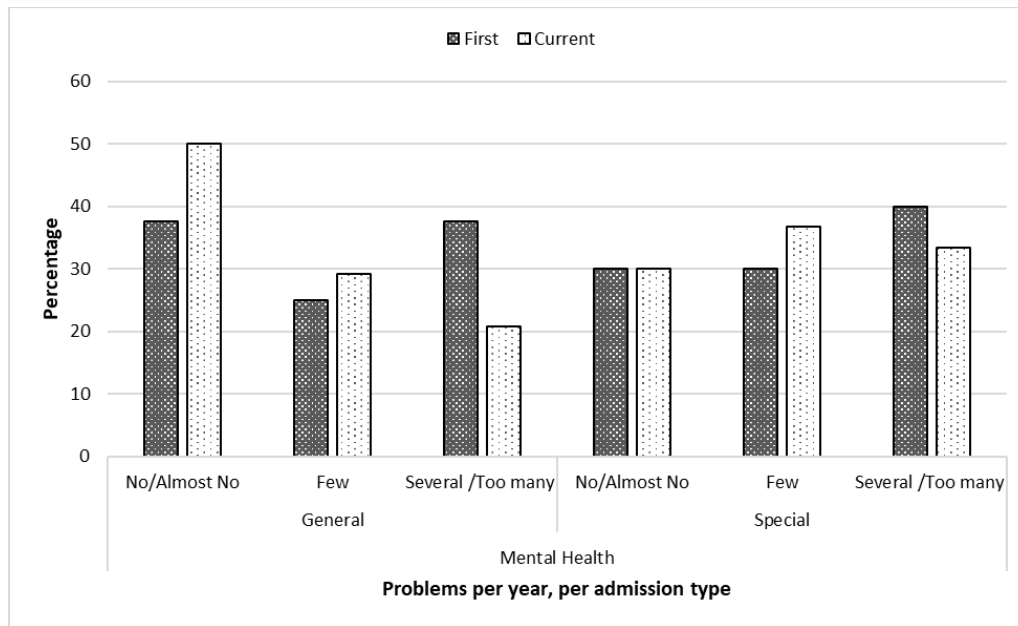


Figure 7 Percentage of student-reported mental health problems per year, per admission type

Following Figure 7, 40 percent of special admission students said they had several issues concerning their mental health during their first year, while general admission students' answers were more spread; over a third (37.5%) reported having no or almost no issues and the same percentage (37.5) reported having several or too many issues with their mental health. When asked about their current year, half (50%) of the general admission students mentioned having little trouble with mental issues while special admission students were relatively divided throughout the spectrum, the majority of them reporting having a few problems (36.67%), followed closely by those reporting several or too many problems (33.33%) and no/almost no problems (30%). Thus, from the pool of students surveyed, special admission students seem to have struggled slightly more with mental issues (feeling stressed, lonely or depressed) than their general admission counterparts. Moreover, even though there has been improvement for both types of admission between first and second year, it seems slightly more favorable for general admission students.

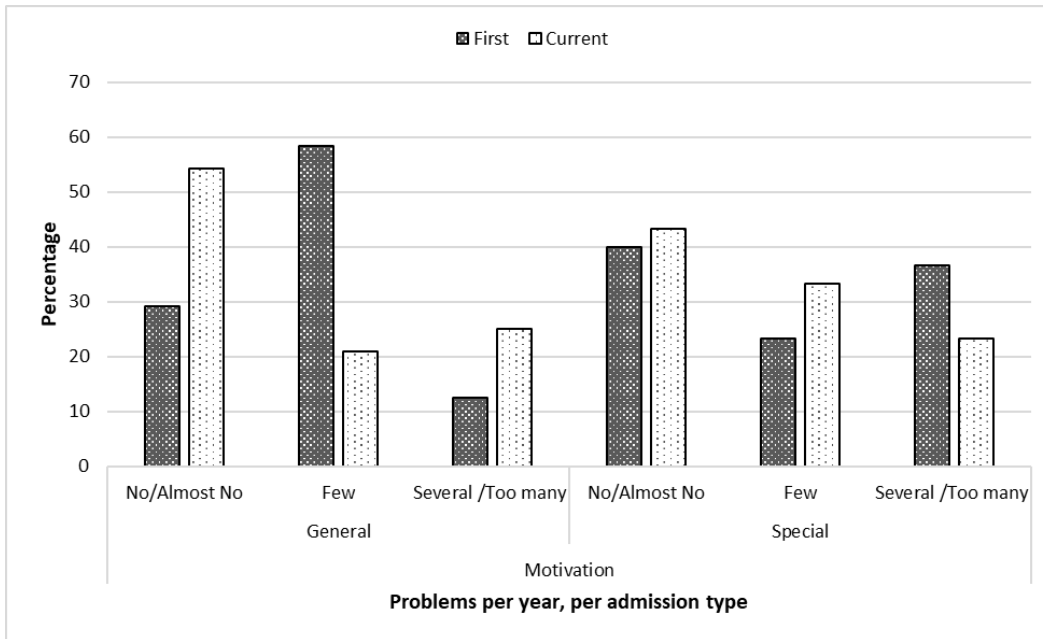


Figure 8 Percentage of student-reported motivation problemas per year, per admission type

Concerning motivation, Figure 8 shows positive changes for general admission students between first and current year, with students reporting having no/almost no problems with motivation increased considerably, from almost 30% to around 55% and students reporting few problems decreasing from almost 60% to 21% in their current year. However, the number of students who reported having several/too many problems with motivation doubled, from 12.5% to 25%. On the other hand, the percentage of students from special admission who reported having no/almost no problems remained almost the same between first and current year (40% to 43.3%), while those reporting few problems increased from 23% to 33%. In contrast to general admission students, the percentage of students who reported having several/too many problems with motivation decreased in about 10 percentage points, from around 36% to 23%. Even though these percentages do not follow students change between first and current year (they only show general distributions per year) it is interesting to note that for both admission groups, students reporting

no/almost no problems in their current year are the majority. Further, while the current year percentage of general and special admission students reporting having several/too many problems do not differ much (25% and 23.3% respectively), special admission students reporting decreased compared to their first year. These differences might be related to the fact that special-access students are suggested to seek support since their first semester, making them less likely to experience too many issues in their second and successive years at university.

Similarly to what was explained above that there were differences in mental health and motivation for both admission groups, figure 9 and 10 below explore percentages on mental health with a focus on gender⁶ between self-identified male and female students for the special admission subgroup.

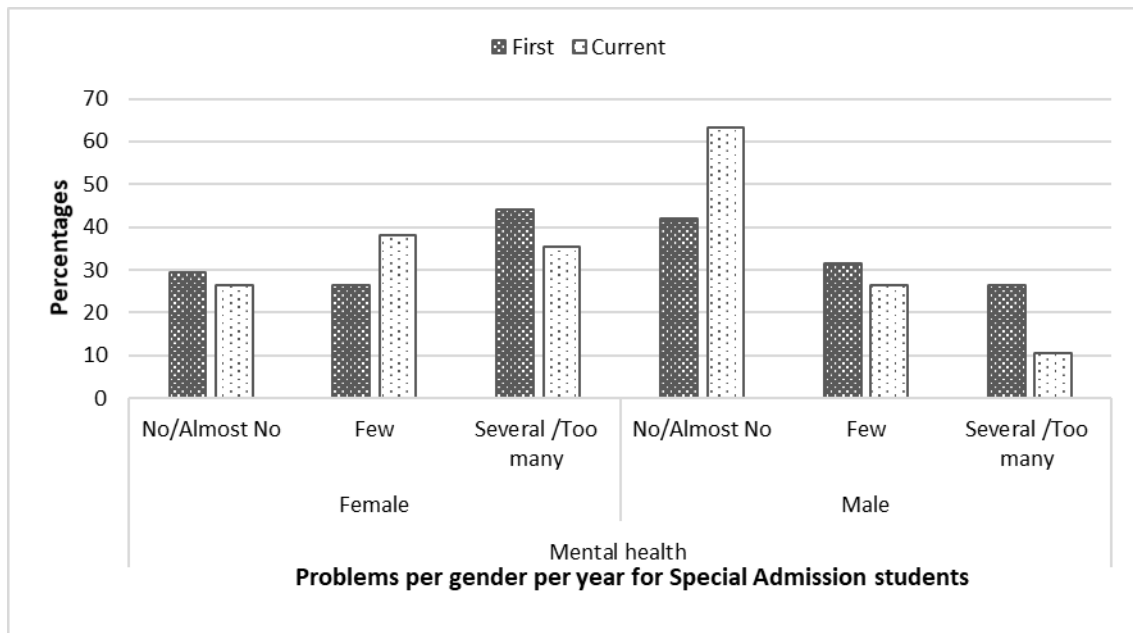


Figure 9 Percentage of mental health problems per gender per year dor special admission students

⁶ There was one gender queer student who participated in the survey but to avoid singling out their answers that data has not been included.

When looking at mental health (Figure 9), even though female students reported improvements between their first and current year of studies, the majority of them reported having few problems (38.24%) or several/too many problems (35.29%) in their current year. On the other hand, the majority of men reported having no or almost no problems (63.16%) in their current year. Thus, even though for female students there seems to be a slight improvement in relation to the level of reported issues in mental health during their first year, it is still greater for male students.

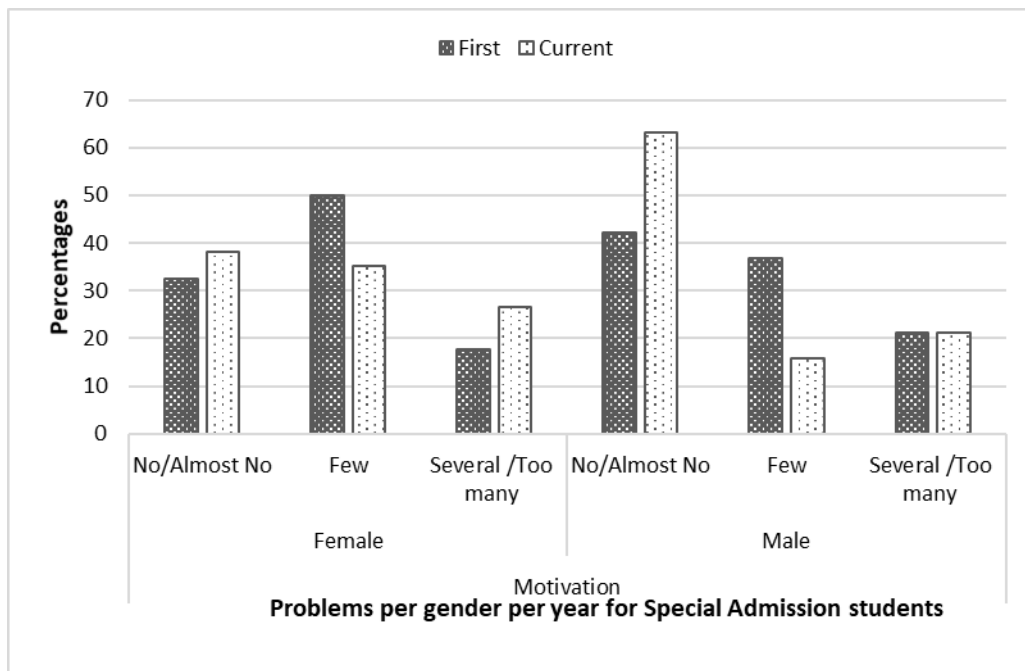


Figure 10 Percentage of motivation problems per gender per year for special admission students

Concerning motivation, Figure 10 above, for studying and engaging in academic activities, female students mostly reported having few (50%) or no/almost no problems (32.35%) in their first year, similarly to male students (42.11% and 36.84% respectively). However, when asked about their current year, women maintained the trend, slightly increasing the number of those who

have little issues with motivation, while the majority of male students (63.16%) reported having no, or minimal issues with motivation at the time of the survey.

Concerning general admission students, the trends are not that different, when looking at differences between male and female students for mental health issues, as presented in Figure 11 and 12 below.

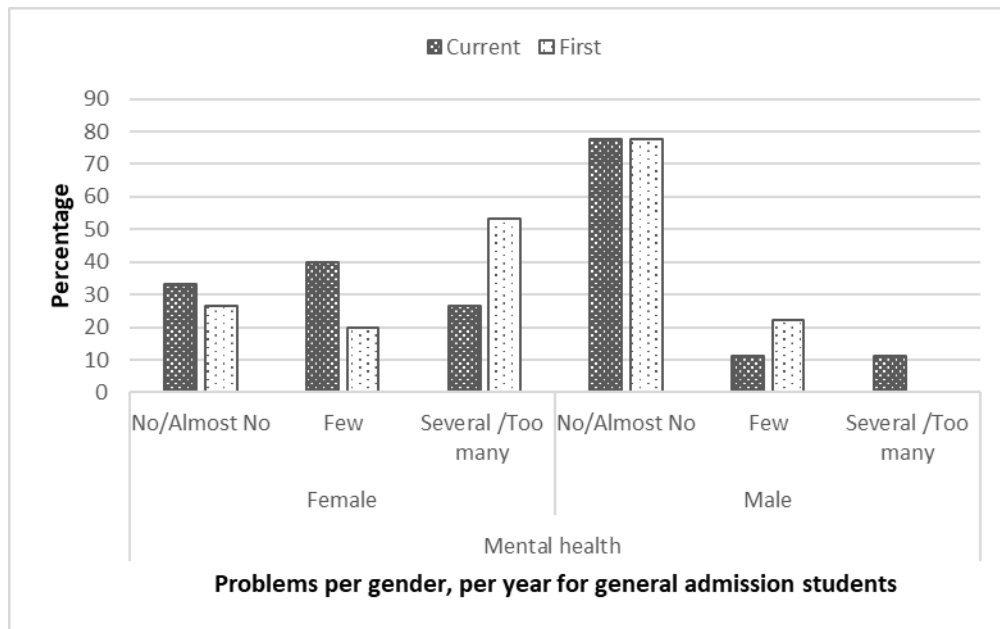


Figure 11 Percentage of problems per gender per year for general admission students

However, for motivation and for both genders, the majority reported having few problems, as it is shown in Figure 12 below.

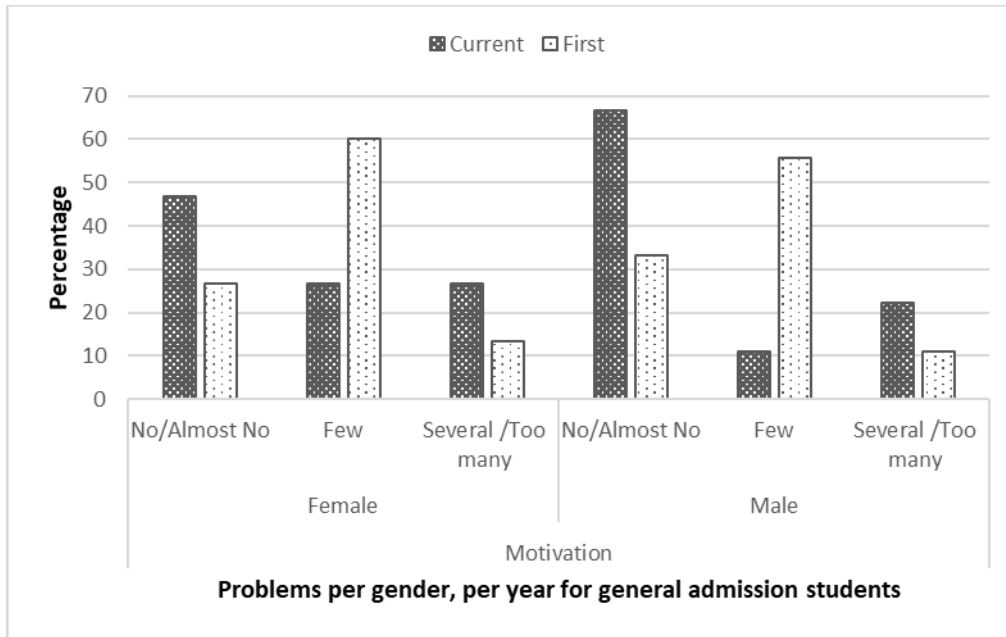


Figure 12 Percentage of motivation problems per gender per year for general admission students

In general, the majority of the students mentioned having minor issues with physical health and social life, regardless of admission type or gender, in both cases improving from first to current year. However, concerning mental health and motivation, general admission and male students reported fewer issues in these two areas than female and special admission students, with the exception of motivation, where general admission students reported similar current levels of motivation problems in their current year, regardless of gender.

5.3 Students' self-reported experiences of discrimination

Almost a third of the students' (n=15, 28%) reported feeling discriminated in some way, mostly due to their socio-economic status (35%) A Chi-square test was run to see whether there was a difference between the distribution of discrimination reports between general admission and

special admission students and the test showed no statistical difference (p value= 0.31, significance level=0.05). A possible factor that could have affected these results is that general admission students, which constitute a third (n=5) of those who reported feeling discriminated, also happen to be beneficiaries of different types of scholarships and tuition benefits. The latter places them in a similar SES standing as special admission students, which could partially explain the results. Following Figure 13 below, of the total number of students who reported feeling discriminated, almost 70% are special admission students, and from those, the majority are SIPEE students.

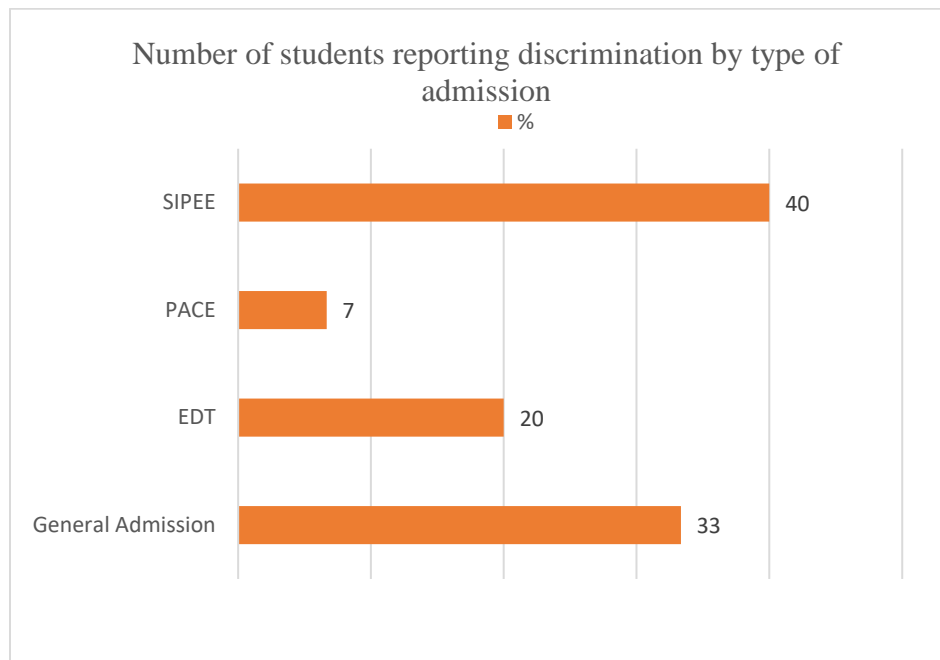


Figure 13 Proportion of discrimination reports by type of admission

Figure 14 below shows the number of students reporting discrimination by type. According to this, the majority of the students who reported having been subject to discrimination mentioned socioeconomic status as the type of discrimination (n=7), closely followed by “other” (n=6).

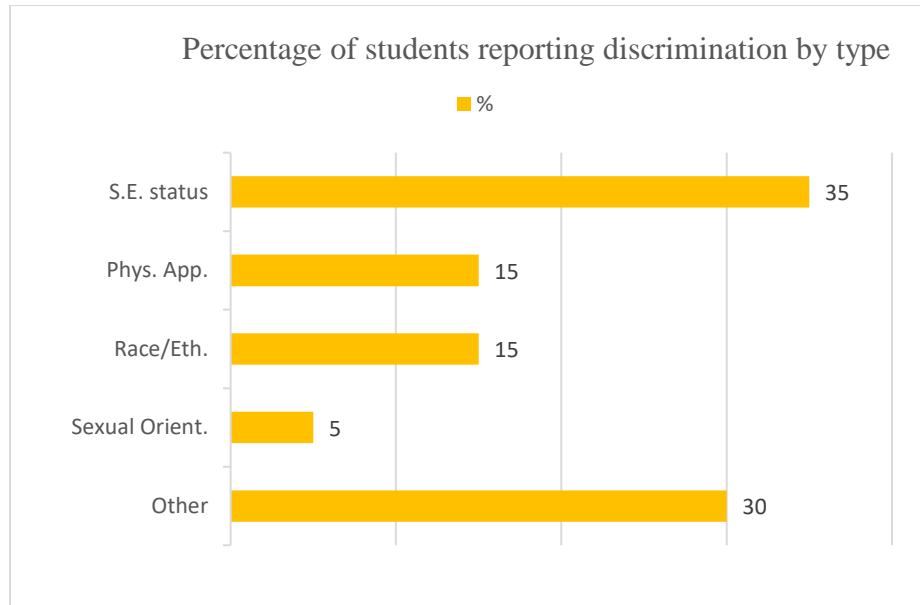


Figure 14 Proportion of discrimination experiences reported by students

Among students who reported “other” types of discrimination, some special admission students reported feeling discriminated for having gained access through special programs, while others mentioned “gender” and “being different”, as the reasons. It is important to consider, especially when comparing special and general admission students, that the sample of students who answered the survey was small and it is not representative of the whole student body. However, these results provide useful information to guide future, more comprehensive research that aims at understanding student experiences in higher education at this institution.

5.4 Description of students, classmates, professors, and workload

Probably some of the most interesting data gathered through the survey was the open-ended response where students had to describe in a few words or short phrases their peers, friends,

professors and academic work. These answers were analyzed using the Appraisal System, providing useful information on how students perceived these four aspects in their lives at university.

For this analysis, I only considered answers of special admission students, having a total of 28 valid responses per Appraised entity (two participants did not complete this part of the survey). The majority of the instances of evaluation were judgements (n=88), followed by appreciation (n=21) and affect (n=9). Table 11 below shows in more detail the number of evaluations coded in students' descriptions of friends, classmates, workload and professors, by type of evaluation.

Table 11 Frequencies of evaluations in students' descriptions by appraised entity and attitude type

Appraised	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Friends	2	0	23	3	0	0
Classmates	3	1	19	8	0	0
Workload	0	2	1	0	11	10
Professors	1	0	26	8	0	0
Total	6	3	69	19	11	10

Note: Number of students included in the sample= 29

As shown in Table 11, instances of judgement greatly outnumber any other type of evaluation, of which most were positive judgements towards friends, classmates, and professors. Among the most common evaluations for workload was appreciation, which were almost evenly divided between positive and negative (11 and 10 respectively). These numbers are not a surprise, considering that evaluations of friends, classmates and professors were made mostly about their behavior. When looking more closely to the type of judgement, findings show that friends were mostly described in terms of supportive behavior towards the appraiser (the students), using nouns such as “apoyo” [support], made-up adjectives such as “apoyadores” [what in English could be

translated as supportive], or short phrases like “son en quienes confío” [they are the ones in whom I trust] or “ellos me acompañaban y sostenían” [they stood by me and supported me]. As well, they were described in terms of positive capacity with terms such as “sociables” [sociable], “agradables” [nice]. Table 12 below shows the frequencies per type of judgement instance and by appraised entity.

Table 12 Frequencies of coded judgement instances by appraised entity

Judgement category	Friends		Classmates		Professors		Total	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Social esteem								
Normality	1	2	1	2	3	3	5	7
Capacity	5	0	8	2	13	3	26	5
Tenacity	11	1	5	0	3	2	19	3
Total	17	3	14	4	19	8	50	15
Social Sanction								
Propriety	4	0	3	5	3	1	10	6
Veracity	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	1
Total	6	0	3	6	3	1	12	7

Note: Highest frequencies by judgement category are in bold.

When describing classmates, students also used a majority of positive evaluations (n=14), but they were mostly in terms of capacity (n=8), similar to professors. Thus, students described classmates as “aplicados” [studious], “muy inteligentes” [very smart], “dedicados” [dedicated], “simpáticos” [friendly], mostly alluding to their academic abilities. Students also described classmates in terms of positive tenacity (n=5) using similar words to those used for friends, such as the noun “apoyo” [support]. Additionally, a couple of students said classmates were “diversos” [diverse], which can be interpreted as a positive evaluation considering the emphasis that this university places on the diversity of its student body and how some students talk about diversity as something that drew them to the University of Chile, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

However, not all descriptions of classmates were positive. A few students used negative judgements (n=4) to describe classmates using terms such as “indiferente” (indifferent), “individualistas” (self-centered), “doble estándar” (two-faced), focusing on the propriety of their classmates’ behavior. Both these negative evaluations towards friends and several of the positive ones relate to giving or not support, something that seems to be important for these students, especially in a very demanding academic environment such as university.

Professors were mostly evaluated in positive terms (n=19) using, for example, adverb plus adjective constructions such as “muy buenos” [very good] or “muy inteligentes” [very smart], alluding to personal capacities. As well, students used adjectives such as “exigentes” [demanding] or “profesionales” [professional], that can be interpreted in relation to their teaching and classroom behavior. Other students described professors with adjectives as “diversos” [diverse], and using phrases as “hay de todo” [there’s a bit of everything], “de todo” (short form of “hay de todo”), probably referring to professors exhibiting a variety of characteristics and behaviors, both positive and negative. Among the negative evaluations (n=8) students used terms such as “estrictos” [strict], “irregulares” [irregular], “apáticos” [indifferent], “encubridores” [deceiving]. The first two evaluations could refer to professors not providing much flexibility when students, for example, have not been able to fulfill certain requirements for personal circumstances, or when their standards and protocols are unpredictable and change without notice. The latter two evaluations listed above could refer to professors not caring much about students’ personal well-being and to not being transparent enough on certain matters.

Finally, workload was evaluated mostly in terms of appreciation, and students made reference to how much it was using quantifiers in the form of adjectives or adjective phrases e.g., “elevada” (high), “demasiada” (too much), “extremadamente mucha” (extremely high), “alta”

(high), “muy alta” (very high). In other cases, students mentioned how difficult it was using adjectives such as “exigente”, “brígida”, “fuerte”, or how they felt about it “estresante”, “me sobrepasa un poco”. Only four out of the 28 students who answered mentioned they felt the workload was OK for them, using terms such as “normal” (normal), “regular” (regular), “adecuado” (adequate). This could mean that the workload has met their expectations or that they have adjusted to it, so it feels normal.

The analysis of the above evaluations seems to suggest that in their relations at university with friends, classmates and professors, support plays a very important role, whether by presence or absence of it. As well, and as it could be expected, most students mentioned that the workload was high and demanding. These findings present interesting insights as to how students relate to their respective academic communities and how they perceive others and the impact they have in their lives. However, given that in the survey students were only asked to provide a few words or phrases to describe friends, classmates, professors and workload, further analysis is needed to better understand students’ evaluations. Therefore, I further explored students’ evaluations using data from the interviews, which will be presented in section 5.2.3. But first, I will present the findings of the thematic analysis I carried out and explain what were the main experiences students reported during the interviews.

Finally, from the survey, I was able to inform my analysis of the interviews and provide more general information about special-access students. However, one of the most important findings from the survey was that it allowed me to obtain information from general admission students, which allowed me to compare their experiences against special admission’s. The latter made me realize how complex special-access students are as a population. As mentioned in the findings earlier, even though there were some differences between special-access and general

admission students that could be expected, there were also several similarities. The latter makes defining general admission student population much harder. This will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion and discussion section, in chapter seven.

6.0 Findings from the interview analysis

Interviews were created as spaces for students to talk about their experiences at university. Furthermore, students interviewed are from different programs, different backgrounds and different cities. These differences become important when looking at some cases where students' lived experiences are divergent despite students being exposed to similar issues. Regardless of these different circumstances, some main commonalities arose among participants. Thus, these findings provide important information to answer research question one, which explores the main experiences these special-access students reported during their time at university. I first begin by introducing the students who participated in the interviews and then I present the main findings.

From the students who agreed to be contacted (20), I was only able to coordinate interviews with six. Table 13 below shows the main background information of these participants.

Table 13 Summary table of participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Age range	Gender	School	Year in program	SAP	Part-time work	Living arrangements	Program change
Elisa	18-20	Fem	Business & Administration	3	EDT	no	Parents	no
Emily	18-20	Fem	Business & Administration	3	PACE	yes	univ home	no
Dani	18-20	Male	Medicine	2	SIPEE	yes	Parents	no
Sebastián	21-23	Male	Architecture and Urbanism	3	EDT	no	Parents	yes
Katya	18-20	Fem	Philosophy & Humanities	2	PACE	no	Relatives	no
Valeria	21-23	Fem	Engineering	4	SIPEE	no	Parents	yes

Note: SAP= Special Access Program

Following Table 13, I interviewed two students per program (PACE, EDT, SIPEE), the majority of which were female (4). As mentioned, the site chosen for data collection was a public university in Chile, the University of Chile. This university was chosen given the variety of programs they offer to minority students, the high prestige this public university holds, and the active role in fighting social injustice and inequities this institution claims to have. These points will be further developed below.

As explained in the methods section, six participants who completed the survey agreed to be interviewed. They are from five different schools in the university and their ages range from 18-23. At the moment of the data collection, April 2019, two participants were enrolled in their second year, three were in their third year, and one was in her fourth year. There were two participants per SAP (Special Access Program) and only two do extracurricular work, either working within a university department (Emily) or volunteering outside the university (Dani). Most participants live with their parents (three of the participants' parents are separated and live with their mother and siblings) and two do not live with direct relatives (Emily lived at a foster care group home⁷ during her high school years and now stays at a university home and Katya stays during weekdays with extended family). Further, two participants started in a different program and switched during their second year; Emily changed from specializations within Engineering and Sebastián changed from Engineering to Architecture.

⁷ Foster care homes in Chile are government funded and are administered by SENAME (National Minor's Service). During the past years, SENAME homes have been under the scrutiny of the public eye and under official investigation due to the persistent psychological and physical, sometimes even sexual, abuse to which the children under their care were being subjected. An official report by the UN was issued in 2017 stating that Chile had systematically violated children's rights in SENAME homes. A year later, a government agency report was issued, but to this date, there have been no major changes in the organization other than the replacement of the head of the organization.

As explained in the methods section, I interpreted students’ reported experiences in two main ways: challenging –situations that students faced that demanded they develop or strengthen certain skills or to make compromises between certain areas in their lives to be successful at university–, or positive—those that brought satisfaction because they constituted an academic or social achievement or because they were instances in which people, entities, or resources available made possible or easier obtaining success at university. Table 14 below shows a summary of the total number of coded experiences by type (challenging or positive) and the corresponding percentage from total.

Table 14 Number and percentage of coded experiences

Type of experience	n	%
Challenging	201	61.09
Positive	128	38.91
Total	329	100.00

From a total of 329 coded reported experiences, challenging experiences almost double the number of positive ones. Similar to several studies (Flanagan Borquez, 2017; Gallardo et al., 2014; Sobrero et al., 2014), these results point to university students struggling with issues such as adjustment to living arrangements, workload, social life, among others. However, for this study, it became relevant to probe and understand more deeply about these challenging and positive experiences.

Based on these results, I explored types of challenging and positive experiences and analyzed the data from different perspectives, as it will be explained in more detail below. It is important to mention that all these descriptions of tallied coded experiences are influenced by the rapport I was able to establish with students, the length of the interviews (which ranged from 1 hour to 30 minutes) and the contextual circumstances of each of the participants (living

arrangements, presence/absence of family, preparation and support provided by special access program, the culture within their respective schools, among the most important). However, I looked at the number of coded experiences to try to understand major trends in students' journeys at university, and this led me to a few key findings:

- i. First, that challenging experiences seem to be prevailing over positive ones
- ii. Second, that among the challenging experiences, academic ones seem to be the most frequent ones
- iii. Third, that there is a high diversity among this section of the student body. In other words, the way students face these situations and the repercussions that stem from these situations will vary considerably depending on the student and their particular histories and sociocultural contexts, which will be explored later in this chapter.

Based on the literature, none of these major findings are unexpected and, in fact, they align what has been reported in previous studies. However, when looking into the types of challenging and positive experiences considering students' contexts (prior experiences, schools enrolled in, family relations), interesting patterns emerge. In the following paragraphs, I briefly develop the main findings presented above in relation to my exploration of coded experiences using thematic analysis and explain how these results led to the following, more detailed analysis at the discourse level using SFL.

When looking at the distribution of coded experiences across participants and programs, there seems to be considerable variation, but a major trend is clear: challenging experiences are more frequent. Figure 15 and 16 show the number of coded experiences by type and participant, and by type (challenging and positive) and program (PACE, EDT, SIPEE), respectively (Please refer to Appendix D for more detailed information). Following Figure 15, based on the interviews,

participants reported more challenging experiences than positive ones, in certain cases more than twice as many (Sebastián, Katya, Valeria).

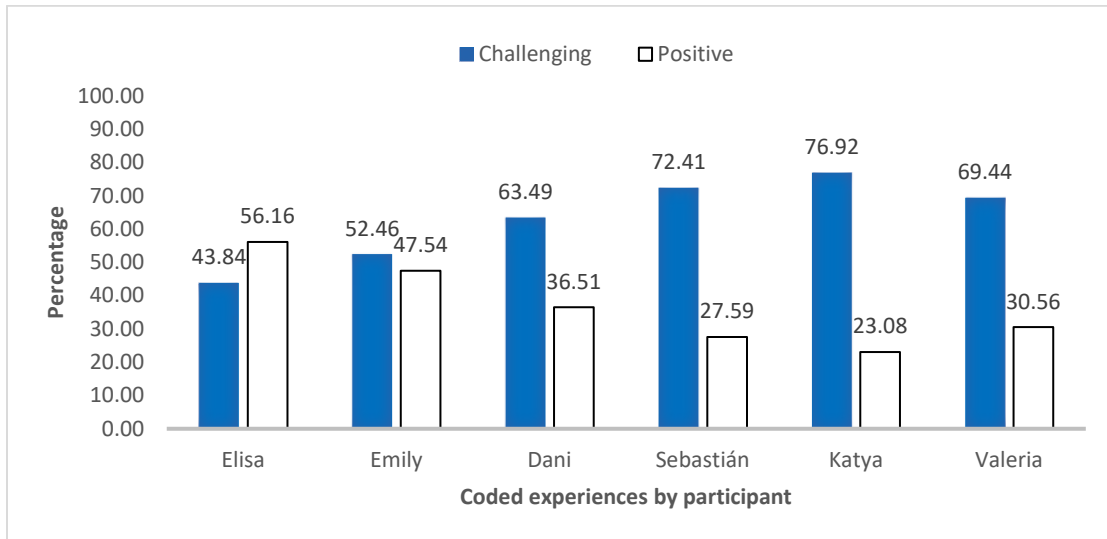


Figure 15 Percentage of coded challenging and positive experiences by participant

Following Figure 15, all but for one of the participants, Elisa, have challenging experiences constituting more than half of the total coded experiences. For the participant with the highest proportion of challenging experiences, Katya, these are three times as many as the positive ones. When looking at the distribution of coded experiences by program, the general trend is very similar, as it is shown in Figure 16.

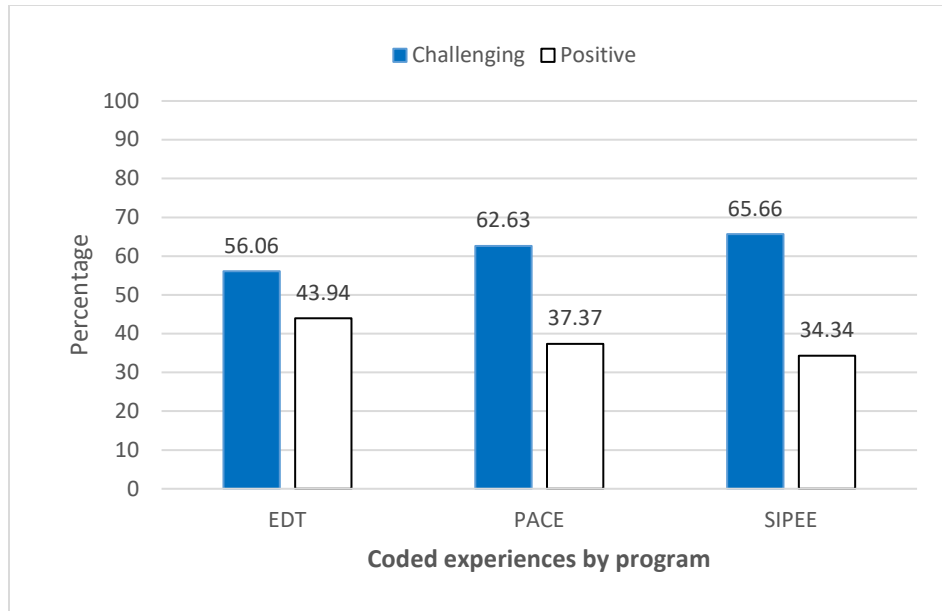


Figure 16 Percentage of coded challenging and positive experiences by program

Throughout programs, challenging experiences outnumber positive ones, being EDT the program with the smallest difference between them (about 13 percentage points) and SIPEE with the highest (about 31 percentage points), having almost twice the number of challenging experiences in comparison to positive ones. These findings are aligned to findings from the survey that point to students having to deal with certain issues in comparison to their general admission classmates, such as mental health and motivation. In the following section I turn to a more detailed analysis of the main challenging and positive experiences these students mentioned in the interviews. It is important to bear in mind that some of the issues and challenging experiences that will be mentioned next, especially those relating to school resources and infrastructure, might not be specific to special-access students; however, even though special-access students' profiles are varied, they all come from families of low socio-economic status, which is usually linked to restricted access to resources outside the university to satisfy their needs. Therefore, special-access students tend to rely more on what the university offers than other, wealthier students, might.

6.1 Main challenging experiences

I grouped challenging experiences into five categories: *academic*, *quality of life*, *school resources*, *social*, and *family/home* (Please refer to Chapter 4, Methodology for a description of each of these challenging and positive experiences, and to Appendix E for a full description of all codes. A brief description of main codes discussed is also included at the beginning of each subsection). From these, following Figure 17 below, *academic challenges* (43.3%) were the most frequent ones across programs and participants.

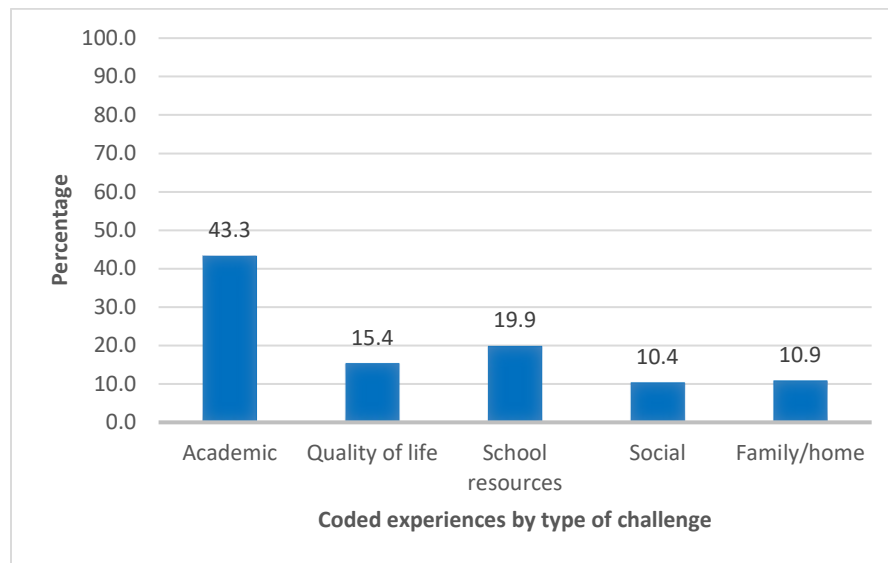


Figure 17 Percentage of challenging experiences by type

Apart from academic challenging experiences, *school resources* accounted for about a fifth of the coded challenging experiences, followed by those concerning *quality of life*. Within academic experiences, the most frequent coded experiences were those relating to *assignments* (33.3%), *professors* (26.4%), *workload* (12.6%), and *organization* (11.5%) (Please refer to Appendix D for a complete table of frequencies and percentages for all codes and subcodes). In

the following subsections, I will address the most important aspects of the most relevant categories mentioned.

6.1.1 Academic

6.1.1.1 Assignments: Group work

Academic assignments category was defined as academic activities, usually graded, that students need to fulfill as part of their course requirements such as oral presentations, essays, readings, reviewing subject content. When I was conducting interviews, I expected students to have issues with assignments and the workload, based on my own experiences, on the information gathered through the survey and on the literature. Because of this, when students mentioned these, I asked follow-up questions to get a better idea where the challenging aspects lied. Within assignments, group work was mentioned by a couple of students as an assigned activity that frequently presented challenges for them. In Emily's case, she has a structured way of working and she explained "el trabajo en grupo me cuesta, porque por lo general, soy de las que lleva como el liderazgo" [groupwork is hard for me, because in general, I am the one who takes a leadership role] and later she added, "sí, he tenido como algunos roces, porque, es como difícil trabajar con gente que no quiere colaborar, o que no va como en la misma línea" [yes, I have had some issues, because it's like hard to work with people who don't want to collaborate, or who doesn't align with you]. In general, Emily did not mention having issues with classmates or working with students outside her group of friends. However, as mentioned above, she does find it hard to work with students who are not as dedicated as she is, so she ends up putting extra burden on herself and usually takes the leadership role. So, in a way, my expectations were met concerning challenges, but it was clear these were much more complex and nuanced than I had expected,

usually having several layers and involving positive aspects as well, which will be addressed later. Similarly, Katya mentioned having no particular issues getting along with classmates, but she was cautious to select people to work with. When I asked if she had issues with some professors assigning groups, she stated: “igual, yo creo que... miedo, porque no le tengo confianza a las otras personas, pero no miedo porque me trataran mal” [like, I think that... fear, because I don’t trust other people, but not fear that people would treat me badly]. Thus, Katya struggles a little with group work mostly because she is afraid of what may come up of that partnership. Further, she also mentioned a very negative experience working with someone who ended up not being cooperative and whose involvement in the group just added more stress to what she considered an already stressful situation. Based on this, it is not surprising that she is skeptic and distrustful of assigned group partnerships.

6.1.1.2 Assignments: Oral presentations

For all students interviewed, oral presentations were a common evaluation, and even though these include different formats and dynamics depending on the program, they are all high stakes. Concerning presentations, several students mentioned feeling anxious, “nervioso(a)” [nervous] about them, but that they usually got good grades in these evaluations. As well, all of them expressed it was not something that came easy to them and it usually involved a lot of work. For example, Sebastián explained “como que no soy tan malo, pero a la hora de que me toca una presentación, me saqué buena nota, pero yo siento que me costó mucho” [like I’m not bad, but when the time comes of presenting, I got a good grade, but I feel that it was hard]. Emily mentioned that it was not a matter of not knowing the topic, but the fact that she gets nervous and starts speaking too quickly. Valeria also talked about presentations, but for her, the issue was not enough exposure to them because of the way her program was designed, but she felt that

Cuando egrese, y empiece a trabajar, generalmente uno tiene que debatir las ideas, y trabajarlas en grupo y lo he visto en las prácticas profesionales que he hecho, y uno siempre tiene que tener buen blablá y saber presentas sus ideas

[when I graduate, and start working, generally one has to debate ideas, and work them within the group and I've seen that in internships I've had, and one always has to have good blah blah and know how to present their ideas]

In the excerpt above, Valeria acknowledges the relevance of gaining the skills and floor command that comes with knowing how to present your ideas, especially later when she enters the job market. Unfortunately, because they are not part of the curricula in her program, she gets very little preparation on this, which based on what she has experienced, will be a disadvantage after graduation.

6.1.1.3 Assignments: Unclear expectations

Two students, Emily and Valeria, mentioned that sometimes they struggled with assignments of humanistic courses they were required to take, specifically when asked to write essays. For Emily, it was particularly hard; she said that when asked to write essays she had no idea what the assignment entailed and stated that “yo nunca había escrito ensayos (...) como que recuerdo la primera vez que me habían dicho, haga un ensayo, como que yo no sabía qué era un ensayo” [I had never written an essay (...) like I remember the first time I was told, write an essay, like I didn't know what an essay was]. For Emily, the assignment might not have been as daunting had she received more explicit instruction as to what she was required to do and explained the main purpose of the task. In a similar way, Valeria was not used to writing essays in her courses, so whenever she took courses that required them, she really struggled and did not know how to translate what she understood from the readings and lectures into an essay. Therefore, for both

these students, dealing with implicit expectations around academic assignments was complicated, regardless of their academic acculturation; Emily went to a public school, lived in a foster group home and is a first-generation student; Valeria was brought up in a home where both parents were professionals and it was expected of her to get a professional degree.

6.1.1.4 Professors: Being unaware of students' need

Under the category of *professors*, I coded instances of students mentioning challenging experiences related to engaging with, understanding, and/or communicating efficiently with professors at the university. As mentioned, this category constituted a fourth of the coded experiences under academic challenges. Even though students also have contact with TAs and tutors, professors are the ones who create and grade most of the assignments, and the ones who make most, if not all, decisions relating to their courses. When asked about professors, Elisa, mentioned that in general she has no problem with them, but she complained that sometimes there are professors who assume that students already know certain subject contents and “no la explican con la detallez que es cuando uno recién se enfrenta al ramo” [and they do not explain it with the detail that you need when you are just facing the subject]. Elisa’s quote points to the fact that there is a great number of students in her school that come from private or outstanding public schools. These schools provide much better preparation for university in terms of contents and academic literacies that are required by some university programs. From her quote and based on the latter, it seems that professors may assume that all students have already mastered concepts or specific information related to their subject, even though some of their students might be seeing these concepts for the first time.

Another aspect that students mentioned about professors was relating to power issues. Students felt professors acted as authoritarian figures inside the classroom, which sometimes prevented students from expressing their concerns because they felt these might not be welcome. For example, Dani stated "... hay docentes que tienen como ese aire de superioridad, de que no pueden decirle nada porque él es el profesor" [there's faculty who have that air of superiority, that you cannot say anything to him because he is the professor]. Similarly, Sebastián mentioned that even though he gets along with most professors there are some that come across as authoritarian. He explained that this issue with professors was particularly hard for him because he knew that he could end up loving or hating class and it would all be because of the professor teaching it.

Katya's concern surrounding professors related more to the apparent lack of empathy that she felt faculty had towards students, which translated in the academic workload they assigned for their courses. Katya used the word "inconsciente" to describe professors, which could be translated as "inconsiderate", meaning that professors are being insensitive to students' problems and feelings, in this case, in relation to the workload. Katya's family lives a couple of hours by train from Santiago, where her school is, and she is currently staying with relatives to attend classes, making commuting hard for her. When asked about how she felt about professors, she mentioned that she feels that professors are "inconsciente[s]" [inconsiderate] because they do not have in mind students' needs when assigning work; she complained that whenever they had a long weekend or holidays, instead of letting them enjoy the extra free time, professors gave them extra homework. Similarly, Valeria also talked about professors' limited understanding of students' actual workload. She stated "... con muchos profesores me pasa que ellos esperan que tu cumplas con su ramo, y nada más que con su ramo, y se olvidan de que eres una persona que tiene que hacer más cosas" [with many professors it happens that they expect that you fulfill the duties for

their classes, and nothing but their classes, and they forget that you are a person that has more things to do]. During the interviews both Valeria and Katya expressed feeling that professors are detached from what students are really going through; they are just focused on going through the syllabus and forget that students have lives outside their class and university, that they may live in other cities, etc. and that these issues may affect their work at university.

Finally, experiences with professors and students' decision-making power varies from school to school. Emily, who lives with other young women who attend different schools within the University of Chile realized that some of her friends had bargaining power over some issues and were very organized; they even had a class delegate to present issues to professor, which was far from her own reality. She mentioned:

Como que este poder de negociación que tienen ellos, como que en la FEN no, como que el profe hace todo, si al final, él va a cambiar la evaluación, depende de él, como que uno se puede quejar, pero como que este delegado representa la opinión de todos
[like this negotiation power they have, like in FEN, no, like the professors does everything, and in the end if he's going to change the evaluation, is up to him, like one can complaint, but like this delegate represents the opinion of everyone]

In this short excerpt, Emily compares her situation at the School of Economy and Business, where professors hold most of the power, with the experience of her university residence friends who attend the School of Social Sciences and other Humanities schools, where they developed a system that allows students to have a representative that brings issues to professors, representing the majority of the students' needs. Thus, even though Emily is in general satisfied with her professors and the experiences in her school, knowing that students in other schools have a more

active role in the academic decisions that affect them, allows her to be critical about her situation and professor's uncontested power in her school.

6.1.1.5 Workload: Too much and too difficult

Experiences coded as *workload* included instances of students mentioning issues on the amount and difficulty of homework and evaluations assigned as part of regular coursework. Concerning workload in general, all students interviewed mentioned struggling with it because of the complexity of the work required and because of the number of tasks involved. Aligned with some of the experiences that students reported concerning "inconsiderate" professors in the previous section, these issues with the workload also align with the responses in the survey that pointed to a negative appreciation of the work students had to address.

Emily, who is currently working part time at the office that provides tutoring classes for students in her school, reflected on the reasons that special-access students are reluctant to ask for help when they realize that the workload might be too much for them:

Por lo general estos alumnos se sienten como culpables, porque ellos creían que eran buenos estudiantes, pero llegan acá y hay otro nivel de estudiantes, entonces como que ellos sienten que es un fracaso de ellos; como que ellos eran buenos, pero acá no son tan buenos. Se sienten, no sé, con vergüenza, o que son tontos, y los van a mirar raro, o eso los va a marginalar más.

[generally, these students feel guilty, because they thought they were good students, but they come here and there's another level of students, so like they feel it's their failure; like they were good, but here they're not so good. They feel, I don't know, ashamed, or that they're dumb, and that people are going to look at them funny, or that it's going to marginalize them even more]

In this short reflection, Emily talks about how special-access students struggle to reconcile their identities in their academic communities; they usually came from being on the top of their class in high school, to barely making it at university. Asking for help and seeking for ways to deal with this extreme workload is hard enough on its own, and when you add how distant and unapproachable professors can be, as it was previously explained, it makes it even harder for them.

When asked about workload, Elisa said “igual siento que está como medio desproporcionado” [I kind of feel like it’s a little disproportionate]. Elisa feels that the way the academic program is designed with specific required courses the first year makes it too hard for students to cope. She mentioned “hay un semestre donde mezclan como todo lo duro” [there’s one semester in which they mix like all the hard stuff], addressing not only the difficulty of the courses she had to take but also the lack of flexibility when taking courses in her program. Valeria also commented on this and mentioned: “siento que es parte del proceso de la u, pero no creo que debiera ser así” [I feel that it’s part of the process of the university, but it shouldn’t be like this]. From this quote, it seems that Valeria acknowledges that university is meant to be hard but, at the same time, she is conflicted when she compares her experience with that of classmates who had studied abroad. She explained that the workload, especially in Chile and in this university, is too much and that this “afecta tu calidad de vida, afecta como te sientes, te produce más cansancio y eso es algo que se da solamente acá en Chile y sobre todo acá en esta Universidad” [affects your quality of life, affects how you feel and makes you feel more tired and this is something that only happens here and most of all in this university]. Hence, given that Valeria has been brought up in a reality where higher education is the norm, she is acquainted with what this educational experience entails, and by doing so, sees the complications and challenges as part of the

experience. However, because she has been exposed to other people's higher education realities abroad, she has taken a critical stance towards it and feels it should not have to be this hard.

6.1.1.6 Organization: How to address academic workload

Experiences coded as *organization* addressed lack of or issues with organizational skills that students felt were needed to address academic workload, for example, how to prioritize between tasks and how to organize study time. Most students interviewed feel the workload is overwhelming, and this fact has made them question their study habits and how they approach this challenge. For example, four of the students interviewed realized they had issues with time-management. When asked about the first year at the university, Emily stated “la organización y el estudio. Como que eso fue demasiado duro” [the organization and study. Like this was too hard]. Like Emily, most of the students in special-access programs gained entrance because they were among the best in their classes in high school. Therefore, it was not uncommon to hear students during interviews say that they struggled the first semesters at university because they were used of doing well without having to study or have a structured study routine. In Emily's case, even though in these three years she has been at university she has attended workshops and has seen some improvement compared to how she was during her first year, she still feels she needs to work with her organization skills. Valeria went through a similar situation, feeling stressed about the academic workload, which added to emotional issues due to lack of peer support in her program, which led to her being on the verge of being expelled for failing too many courses. Therefore, these experiences show that, for these students, increased workload compared to what students were used to at school not only affect these students' grades, but also their mental, and sometimes,

physical wellbeing⁸. Students, especially when they compare themselves with high achieving classmates, start questioning their abilities, sense of belonging, and identities in higher education. The latter will be discussed further later in the discourse analysis section.

6.1.2 School resources

6.1.2.1 Infrastructure

All students interviewed mentioned having some difficulty dealing with one or more of the resources provided by their schools. I defined *School resources* as resources provided by the university to facilitate student life in academic, and non-academic areas. Experiences related to school resources constituted the second highest coded challenging experience, reaching almost 20% of coded challenges. The two categories with highest counts under school resources were experiences relating to *infrastructure* (36%) and *food* (26.8%). Instances during the interview coded as infrastructure were those referring to the state, quality and appropriateness of campus infrastructure, e.g., classroom size and seat availability, study rooms, library. These experiences will be briefly addressed below.

Participants in some of the less privileged schools (such as Sebastián in Architecture and Dani in Medicine) explained that they usually had classes in overcrowded rooms, where sometimes there were not enough seats for everyone. So, when I asked about challenges in relation to infrastructure, Dani mentioned that some of his classes were held in places that were “converted

⁸ Even though Sebastián did not mention the topic of increased workload directly, in the weeks following our interviews, students in his school protested about it. These manifestations were highly publicized and appeared in different media outlets. A spokesperson of the students organized explained that the heavy workload was taking a toll on them and they were suffering the consequences; the school counselor was overbooked and that there had even been suicide attempts (El Desconcierto, 2019).

classrooms” (former storage facilities), and therefore had little or no temperature control and natural light.

It is interesting to note that students are well aware of the differences between schools in terms of resources within the university. Given that Sebastián is studying architecture, he had a more critical perspective on infrastructure. For example, he mentioned that when they were studying issues of inclusion in city planning, they ended up analyzing their own school and realized that it is completely inappropriate for people in wheelchairs or restricted mobility. At the same time, he acknowledges that the school is housed in an old building that is now considered part of the heritage of the university, and therefore, little can be done to modify it. This practical exercise that asked students to apply their knowledge on inclusion in city planning to their own school supported and encouraged students’ critical stance in their programs and through their academic interests. This is reflected in, for example, in the instances in which students in this school have been involved in nation-wide protests, contributing from their own areas of specialization⁹

When talking about infrastructure, Emily, who studies in one of the wealthiest schools in the university, is aware of the privileges she has there and, for example, during the interview she mentioned jokingly that her friends who attend a different campus from her own, always say that they like hers because “en la FEN siempre hay confort” [at FEN there’s always toilet paper]. What could be considered an almost anecdotal remark, points to basic needs not always being met across campuses and schools within the university. Emily also mentioned that she has been to, for

⁹ For example, in the context of the current social uprising in Chile, students of different schools of architecture, among them from the university of Chile, supported one of the movement’s main demands that requested structural changes to improve living conditions of the population. They took to the streets and draw floor plans of 17m² apartments (182 ft²) on a 1:1 scale on a busy street in Santiago. The purpose was to show how real estate companies were increasing housing prices to amounts unreachable by the majority of the population for units in which people can barely live (Valencia, 2019)

example, the Philosophy and Humanities campus, and she has noticed how different it is from hers. This has made her be very thankful for all she has access to but, at the same time, has made her aware that not all students in this university enjoy these privileges. Students also mentioned issues navigating school resources, but this will be addressed in the following section under quality of life

6.1.2.2 Food

Instances coded under *school resources* and *food* were those in which students mentioned access to or quality of the food available on campus. Most students interviewed receive a government monthly meal stipend, BAES (Beca de Alimentación para la Educación Superior [Food Scholarship for Higher Education]) that provides them with a card that allows them to purchase 20 meals per month during 10 months a year (Ministry of Education Chile, n.d.). University students who receive this stipend have access to a special menu in their school's cafeteria, and they are also allowed to purchase food at participating cafés nearby campus.

When asked about food, several students mentioned that there were some issues, mostly related to food availability, and space in their school's cafeteria. Elsa, Emily, Sebastián and Valeria complained about not having enough space in the cafeteria for everyone and that sometimes the money from the meal stipend was not enough for the whole month. Sebastián mentioned “de eso nos estamos quejando, que han estado subiendo constantemente el precio y al final lo que le puede entregar a uno la JUNAEB es el mínimo” (that's what we're complaining about, that they have been increasing the price and that in the end what we can get from JUNAEB is the minimum). Also, Emily and Valeria talked about the quality of food provided, and they complained that it is usually not healthy, so they sometimes prefer to purchase food from food vendors on the street or go to other cafeterias near their campuses. Even though food might not be one of the most

important issues students mentioned based on their comments, it was addressed by most of the participants and it is a factor that adds up to whatever other issues students might be going through.

6.1.3 Quality of life

6.1.3.1 Mental and physical health

I described *Quality of life* as issues relating to students' overall well-being. From a total of 26 instances coded as quality of life challenges, the most frequent were *mental health* (41%), *physical health* (19%), and *commuting* (13%). The most important issue mentioned, *mental health*, related mostly to students mentioning issues associated to stress, depression, and anxiety, associated to academic as well as non-academic factors. For example, some students, such as Emily, have been receiving therapy for several years now due to traumatic events from her childhood and she has been getting due care since she was enrolled at university. Katya also mentioned needing therapy, but unlike Emily, she has not been able to get the help she needs. This difference in mental health resources varies from school to school. Officially, all schools within the university offer mental health care and have a specific health care office to which students are directed to when having any health-related concern. However, given the financial and administrative independence that schools possess and the, sometimes, stark difference between financial resources available for each school, offer and effective access to resources varies considerably among schools. For example, Emily who is enrolled in the School of Economy and Business, one of the schools known to be among the ones with the most funds and resources, had no issues obtaining regular appointments with a therapist on campus, which she reported have definitely been very useful for her. She stated:

esto como de... volver a traer temas como que, que yo no había tratado, como que, por ejemplo, el paso por el SENAME, entonces como que traerlo de vuelta, como que también afecta el estado de ánimo, entonces como que no puedes estar al cien por ciento en el nivel académico si estás mal emocionalmente.

[this thing of... bringing back issues like that, that I had not dealt with, like, for example, my stay at SENAME, so like bringing it back, like that it also affects your mood, so, like you can be a hundred percent at an academic level if you you're bad emotionally]

Emily acknowledges that there were issues from her childhood she had not dealt with and that bringing them back definitely affects her academic performance. However, she feels receiving mental health support has been positive for her and when asked whether she feels there has been improvement, she mentioned: “Sí, pero creo que todavía me queda mucho, pero comparado con el primer año, sí” [Yes, but I still feel there's a lot left to do, but compared with the first year, yes].

On the contrary, Katya attends the School of Philosophy and Humanities, and her experience obtaining access to mental health resources has been completely different from Emily's. Her school, one of the ones that struggles the most with funding, offers therapy sessions through the social assistant but obtaining actual access, has been very difficult. Apparently, there is a high demand for therapy and the school has been unable to meet the demand; Katya has been on a waiting list for months. When I asked her about her the most important obstacles for her to succeed at university, she stated:

Principales obstáculos yo creo que, últimamente, no sé si... esto después lo podrán decir o no, por ejemplo, yo, en verdad, muchos alumnos, tenemos problemas emocionales, de ansiedad, muchas cosas, y que igual te distraen mucho de lo que tenís que hacer”

[Main obstacles I think that, lately, I don't know whether... this will be able to be said later, for example, I, actually, many students, we have emotional problems, anxiety, many things, and that they actually distract you from what you have to do]

Just like Emily, Katya explained that emotional problems place a burden on students and that if they are not addressed, this makes it harder for them to fulfill all their duties at university. Katya talked specifically about how hard it was for her to access to mental health resources and stated:

En la u tampoco hay mucha ayuda, ehm... Como lo, el [student health service center], el [student health service center], por ejemplo, te digo ahora, yo he intentado pedir por un mes seguido hora en el psicólogo (...) y para mucha gente es así. Y he ido a diferentes partes. Entonces, al final, capaz que lo termine pagando particular. Eso igual ha sido un obstáculo muy importante, porque mi salud mental igual me está afectando para estudiar.

[At the university there isn't a lot of help, eh... like, the (student health service center), the (student health service center), for example, I tell you, I've tried for a whole month to get an appointment with the psychologist (...) and for many people it's like that. I've been to different places. Then, in the end, it's likely I'll end up paying it privately. That has been a very important obstacle, because my mental health is affecting me to study]

When Katya was telling me about this, she was clearly upset. I was able to tell through her tone and expression it was really frustrating for her this whole situation. Even though the university offers resources, they are not really accessible for her, which made her consider try to obtain them through her own means, situation that will pose an extra financial burden on her family.

Instances coded as *physical health* related to students discussing issues that affected their overall physical wellbeing, such as irregular weigh loss/gain, problems sleeping, or

untreated/undiagnosed illnesses. For example, Dani mentioned having physical issues that were posing an extra burden on him; he was struggling with physical pain, which at the time of the interview, had not been clearly diagnosed (During member checking he confirmed he was finally diagnosed and was receiving treatment for it). Also, he had to deal with family issues, lack of communication inside the family, and a younger sister with an eating disorder. He had taken on the responsibility of helping his sister and mentioned that he was mostly at home because of her.

Sí, porque es lo más que puedo lograr como ser de apoyo, porque de contención ya no son de mi injerencia en los problemas que tenga mi mamá, porque ya estuve mucho tiempo metido en eso y ahora me quiero centrar AQUÍ en lo que es la universidad y mi hermana si es posible.

[Yes, because it is the most I can do, like being support because being a contention, it's not on me to interfere in the problems my mom has, because I was already on that for a very long time and now I want to focus HERE on the university and on my sister, if possible].

In the extract above, Dani explains that he no longer wants to get involved in any problem his mother may have and that his involvement at home is mostly to be of support to his younger sister and focus on his work at university, which seems to be a priority for him at the moment. Thus, in Dani's case, there seems to have been some issues that were troubling him at home, especially with his mother, that could have posed extra mental stress for him, reason that he decided to distance himself from these issues. However, given that he wants to support his sister, he adds on responsibilities that might be competing with the academic responsibilities he has at the university.

6.1.3.2 Commuting

Experiences coded as *commuting* were those that related to home-to-university travel issues, including time, expenses, and transportation availability. For students, commuting experiences are varied; some students mentioned that commuting was easy for them and not much time was spent on it, as it was for Emily and Dani, who did not spend more than 20 minutes to get to campus. However, for other students like Katya and Sebastián, who live far away from their campuses, commuting takes considerable time from their daily routine. In Katya's case, she mentioned "o sea, de repente, si yo no me quedo más rato en la u, es porque me demoro una hora para allá pa Pudahuel" [I mean, sometimes, if I don't stay longer at the university, it's because it takes an hour to get there to Pudahuel]. In this quote, Katya explains that she takes about an hour, sometimes more, to get home, so it becomes more complicated for her to stay working at the university after classes. The latter is basically because commuting later during the day poses increased security risks and fewer options of public transportation. Sebastian also relies on public transportation to get home; therefore, he works around public transportation schedules to have a safe way to arrive home. Students like Katya and Sebastián have learned to work around the restrictions that relying on public transportation bring and they have had to adapt their work for school accordingly.

Even though I have separated challenging experiences to operationalize the analysis, as mentioned previously, categories tend to overlap with one another, making it difficult to identify particularly challenging experiences that might be more relevant for students than others. However, relying on frequency of coded experiences, academic challenging experiences, seemed to be the most relevant for students. More specifically, those relating to the amount and difficulty of academic workload, dealing with unclear expectations for assignments and distant, indifferent

professors seemed to be among the most reported challenging experiences. In the following section, I will present findings on positive experiences.

6.2 Main positive experiences

As mentioned, from all coded experiences in interviews (329), positive experiences constituted about 40% of the total. Based on the information students reported during the interviews, I grouped positive experiences into seven areas: *academic*, *achievements*, *quality of life*, *school resources*, *social*, *support*, and *family/home* (A description of all categories can be found in Appendix E2). Many of these seven categories are the same as for challenges, which again supports the notion that students reported different aspects of their experiences, including both, issues that they needed to learn how to deal with, and other aspects that eased their journey in higher education.

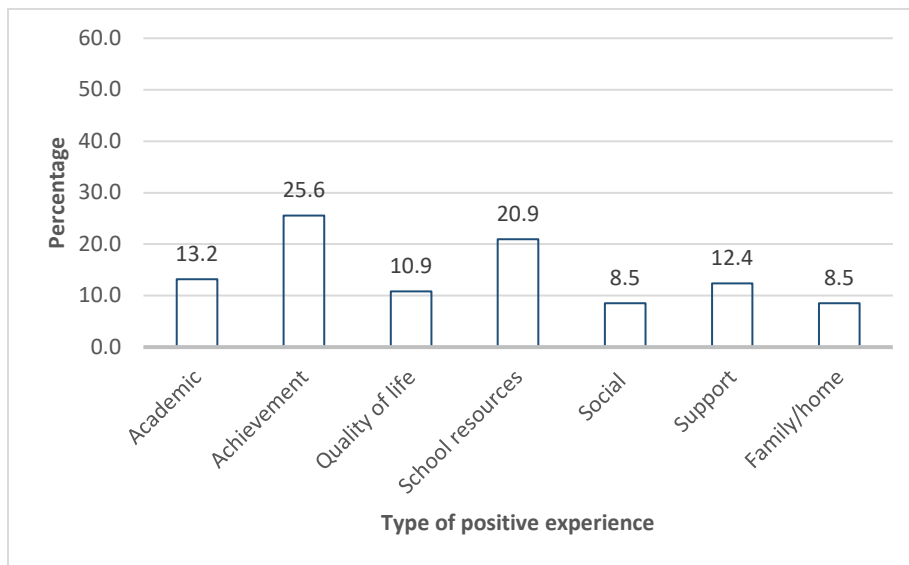


Figure 18 Percentage of coded positive experiences by type

From all experiences coded as positive, *achievements* (26%), *school resources* (21%) and *support* (12%) were the most frequent, as it can be seen in Figure 18. In the following subsections I will address these in more detail. Please refer to Appendix D for a detailed account of frequencies and percentages of all codes and subcodes under positive experiences.

6.2.1.1 Achievements: Academic

Instances coded as *achievements* were those related to students' accomplishments at university. Experiences coded as *achievements* were considered as such, based on students' answers to a specific question that asked for this. Within achievements, the most frequent subcategory was *academic* achievements (83%), which I defined as academic accomplishments, for example, passing a course, obtaining a good grade, or receiving praise for work, or their performance on a test or assignments.

Under this category, most students mentioned that just being able to maintain access to university has been an achievement for them. For example, when asked about achievements, Elisa mentioned she felt proud of “de haber llegado hasta aquí. Nunca pensé que iba a llegar tan lejos” [of having it made till here. I never thought I would get this far]. Elisa entered through the EDT program and she was in her third year at the time of the interview. She mentioned that a particular achievement for her has been that “me ha ido o no tan mal; me ha ido relativamente bien. Y ahora voy a hacer ayudante de un ramo” [I've done not so bad; I've done relatively well. And how I'm going to be TA for a class]. Not all courses in all schools have TAs, and those who do, it is usually the excelling students that have a chance at being one. Usually, there is no formal selection process for TAs; they are just approached by professors and asked whether they want to be TAs. Elisa expanded on this topic when asked about a particular positive group work experience that ended up in receiving an offer to be a TA:

Porque si bien me costó un poco adaptarme a la u, esto (having done very well in a group assignment) significa que ya me puedo adaptar mejor y puedo conseguir las cosas que quería lograr. Que me vaya bien, y en este caso, la profe se haya dado cuenta y nos haya invitado a ser ayudantes de su ramo.

[Because even when it was a little hard to adapt to university, this means (having done very well in a group assignment) that I can adapt better, and I can accomplish the things I wanted to achieve. That I'm doing well, and in this case, that the professor had noticed that and had invited us to be TAs]

As other students mentioned, being offered a position as TA is a great accomplishment and Elisa sees having received this offer as a confirmation that she has been able to fulfill her duties as a university student and adapt to the demands of her coursework. Another student from the same school as Elisa, Emily, also mentioned feeling to have adapted to school as an achievement. Emily stated that “como que encontré un grupo de amigos, como que, me gusta la facultad, como que estoy metida en algunos proyectos, entonces, eso igual es bueno” [like I found a group of friends, like, I like the school, and like I'm involved in some project, so, that is like good]. She sees that being involved in academic activities in her school and finally finding a group of friends she feels comfortable with, is proof that she was able to adapt to the university and she sees that as an important achievement.

Another important positive experience coded as *academic* was related to English. Students mentioned that even though for other students, mostly general access ones, English classes offered at the university were not good, students interviewed reported, in general, having improved their English level and feeling much more comfortable reading texts in English when required. For example, Emily stated:

Yo creo que, bueno, comparado con mí, tengo alumnos, compañeros que han dicho que el nivel de inglés de la FEN [her school] es nefasto, es malo y todo, y yo, así como, yo he aprendido demasiado. Porque comparado con su realidad, quizás es mala, pero con la mía es como lo mejor.

[I think that, well, compared with me, I have students, classmates that have said that the level of English at FEN (her school) is horrible, it's bad and all, and I'm like, I have learnt so much. Because compared to their reality, maybe it's bad, but to mine it's like the best]

In this quote, Emily acknowledges that, for some students, English classes might not be up to their standards, but for her, it has been a great help and she has learnt a lot from them. It is important to remember that Emily, just as Elisa, attend the School of Economy and Business, and many of their classmates are students who come from private schools that are dual language and multilingual (with English being one of the languages taught).

Another important aspect that some students mentioned as an academic achievement was the fact that despite drawbacks such as failing courses, sometimes more than one, they were able to get back on track and successfully pass those courses. For example, Valeria mentioned that in 2017 she was very depressed and sad, and she had a tough time trying to focus on her classes. This led her to fail a couple of courses twice and was placed on academic probation. She stated: “entonces al siguiente año, me puse mucho las pilas, los ramos que, con los que había repetido dos veces, ya los pasé, me eximí, fui como de las mejores” [then next year, I gave it all, the courses that, that I had failed twice, I passed them, and I was exempt (from taking the final test), I was one of the best]. Valeria mentioned that even though she was almost on the verge of being expelled from university because of failing too many courses, she studied hard and was able to not only

pass those courses but also be top of her class, which definitely constituted an important achievement for her.

For these students, academic achievements related mostly to fulfilling their academic duties, i.e., passing all courses, being able to fulfill all academic requirements to remain as a regular student, doing well in class. However, they also mentioned obtaining recognition for their work and being offered opportunities to participate in academic life in other capacities, for example, as a TA or being offered a part-time job within the school, as was Emily's case. As discussed in the previous section, students also experienced academic challenges, such as failing courses, and being able to overcome these obstacles was a considerable achievement they felt proud of. Finally, some students reported feeling satisfied of having developed their English language skills at university, and were thankful for the classes they received, contrary to their classmates that had attended private schools who found them too basic and, sometimes, pointless.

6.2.1.2 School resources: Infrastructure

Positive experiences coded as *school resources* were considered as those relating to resources provided by the university that facilitated students' lives in academic and non-academic settings. Under school resources, the three most frequently coded were *infrastructure* (36%), *tutoring* (29%) and issues relating to *access/navigation* (26%) of these resources.

Infrastructure was reported as positive in relation to the state, quality and appropriateness of campus resources e.g., classroom size and seat availability, study rooms, library, availability and usefulness of technological resources, including web university platform and computer programs required in the curriculum. In this respect, most students mentioned feeling that their schools had everything they needed. For example, Katya, who attends the School of Philosophy and Humanities mentioned: "de repente hay salas que a uno no le gustan, pero está todo, todo bien

implementado, buenas bibliotecas, siempre hay computadores y lugares para estudiar” [sometimes there are rooms you don’t like, but there’s everything, everything is well implemented, good libraries, there’s always computers and places to stud]. Katya feels that despite some rooms not being the most comfortable ones, the school offers everything she feels she needs in terms of infrastructure. Similarly, Dani, who attends the School of Medicine feels that everything is adequate in terms of infrastructure and that it is easy to move around campus and stated that, in general, “el ambiente universitario es bien, bien acogedor parte así toda la Facultad de Medicina” [the university atmosphere is very, very welcoming like this, the whole School of Medicine]. For Dani, it seems to be that the way the rooms and buildings are set up in his school is welcoming to students and he seems to express that he feels comfortable moving around campus, finding all the spaces he needs at the university. In summary, the students interviewed expressed positive reactions to the physical resources provided by their respective schools and were able to provide specific examples of the university infrastructure that facilitated their university experience.

6.2.1.3 School resources: Tutoring

The second most coded aspect under positive school experiences associated to school resources was *tutoring*, which I defined as the availability, quality and frequency of tutoring sessions for students to review or strengthen core subject areas. Even though a few students mentioned having a few challenges with tutors, in general, they were seen as a great resource provided by the university¹⁰.

¹⁰ Tutors and TAs are roles taken usually by fellow students at the university and, in general, they provide support to students. However, tutors are in charge of teaching special, usually short, supplementary classes, for which students need to apply and register for. These classes are not part of the core curriculum of students’ programs and special-access students at this university have priority to enroll in these courses. On the other hand, TAs are students

As part of a university-wide initiative, students have access to several programs that can help them develop academic skills. Most of these programs work developing academic reading and writing skills. Additionally, specific schools, such as the School of Economy and Business (where Emily and Elsa attend) and Engineering (where Valentina attends) offer short support courses, mostly advanced math courses such as Calculus, for all students. However, special-access students have preference when enrolling and they are usually ensured a place in these courses if they decided to enroll in them. Valeria, for instance, talks about some of these tutoring opportunities during her first year saying that:

(...) habían como cursos especiales talleres acá, que buscaban a los niños que habían entrado por cupo especial y les hacían como clases extras para poder facilitar sus estudios porque se entendía que no tenían quizás tan buena base como gente de otros colegios.

[(...) there were like special workshops here, that targeted students who had entered through special admission and they had special classes for them to help them with their studies because it was understood that they maybe didn't have as good a base as people from other schools]

In this quote, Valeria talks about these academic tutoring sessions that mostly targeted special-access students, such as herself. She acknowledged that these courses were trying to make up for insufficient university preparation that special-access students might have received during their high school years. Elisa talks about these special courses from her own experience saying that

who provide support through a specific course, which they have usually already taken themselves, and have been selected by the professor to provide assistance during the semester/year. This assistance may be from grading short assignments to working directly with students during class hours. Thus, tutors, in general, are expected to have a more direct contact with students, while TAs will not necessarily be present in all classes and their involvement with students can be indirect.

Yo todas las veces que he estado en Mate me he puesto en las tutorías, porque ayudan mucho, como que siempre nos ayudan mucho, y todos los que entran como con ingresos prioritarios, generalmente tienen mayor prioridad para entrar a las tutorías.

[...all the times that I have taken Math I have enrolled in tutoring classes, because they helped a lot, like they always help us a lot, and everyone who enters through priority access [sic] generally have priority to enter in those tutoring sessions].

According to Elisa, she always takes advantage of these tutoring sessions, especially when taking Math courses. She also knows she had priority to enroll in these courses for having gained access through the EDT¹¹. However, tutoring sessions such as the ones Elisa and Valeria mentioned in the quotes above are not available in all schools nor for all subjects. On this issue, PACE students (students who were enrolled through the college preparation program from the government) have an advantage; In all schools and universities where there is a PACE student, there is also a PACE mentor, who usually is a professor of the school. This mentor works as a point of contact for guidance on all the resources available to PACE students as well as a point of contact to other faculty members within their schools. Mentor's main goal is to guide students throughout their university trajectory and help them integrate to the academic community and support their retention and graduation. These mentors have the ability to hire tutors (apparently paid by the school) when PACE students require them and work one-on-one with them. So, when Katya, who enrolled through PACE, realized she was absolutely lost in one of the classes she was taking, she reached out to her mentor and she contacted her with a personal tutor. She explains that it was easy to get access to this tutor through PACE, but she explains that without her PACE

¹¹ In her quote, Elisa mentions priority access, probably as a reference to one of the special-access programs SIPPE, which stands for Priority System of Educational Equity. Even though she mentioned "priority access" which only refers to SIPEE, she might have wanted to refer to all special-access programs.

mentor's help, she would not have known where to look: "si no estuviera en el PACE, buscar como un tutor o algo, la verdad que no sabría mucho" (if I wasn't in PACE, looking for a tutor or something, the truth is I wouldn't know much about it). She later explained how she felt about this experience and she stated:

Primero que nada, lo más importante fue que yo sentí una satisfacción, o sea, no sé si satisfacción o alegría, en que ya estaba en-, en-, entendiendo algo, porque antes yo veía estas [technical term] y yo por más que intentaba, y veía las definiciones y todo, no entendía.

[First of all, the most important was that I felt satisfaction, I mean, I don't know if satisfaction or happiness, given that I was un- un-, understanding something, because before I saw these (technical term) and regardless of how much I tried, and saw the definitions and everything, I didn't understand]

In this quote, Katya talks about two positive aspects of this mentoring experiences. First, the positive feelings associated to finally understanding a topic that was hard for her and that was causing her frustration for not being able to make sense of it. Second, she explained that this tutoring experience was also positive because of the fact the tutor "tuviera paciencia" [was patient] with her and she felt comfortable enough to tell her everything she was not clear about.

In summary, students interviewed mentioned positive experiences with tutors and tutoring sessions, as these became valuable resources to begin to master contents that were fundamental in their programs, but that in most cases, required prior knowledge they did not cover in high school. As well, and different from students from the other two programs, students from PACE have the advantage of not only have priority access to tutoring classes as the rest of special-access students,

but they also can ask for private tutors. Based on what students interviewed mentioned, resources such as tutoring sessions facilitated their students' academic work and were highly appreciated.

6.2.1.4 School resources: Access/navigation

The third most coded aspect under school resources was related to availability and clarity of information related to resources available, including information on what resources entail, cost (if any) for the student, contact information, and location of resources. This particular aspect seemed to change considerably from school to school. As mentioned in the previous section on challenging experiences, Katya was struggling navigating and accessing psychological help from her school. However, Emily, who is a student who enrolled through PACE, just as Katya, had a totally different experience. Emily, who attends the School of Economy and Business, was told since the day she enrolled at the university who she needed to talk to in order to gain access to the variety of resources available to her. When I asked her how easy it was for her to get information from the contact person they had mentioned when she first started, she stated: "No. Ellos siempre como, y si no, me dicen así como, espérame y lo averiguo, y te digo en unos días, te mando un correo" [No. They are always like, and if not, they tell me like, give me a few and I'll check, and I can get back to you in a few days]. From Emily's answer, I got the impression she navigates the resources at the university with ease, and even when information on these resources has not been available, people in charge have always been helpful and willing to look into whatever she is requiring. Thus, for students interviewed is not only important having access to resources but also knowing how to navigate them, knowing who to contact when questions and issues arise. However, navigating resources and effectively accessing them does not seem to be something directly related to programs, but more specifically tied to what different schools within the university offer.

6.2.1.5 Support: Family

Support was a special category created only for positive experiences. I created this category as a stand-alone category, contrary to the *support* category created for challenging experiences, given the importance that students gave to this. I coded experiences as *support* when they talked about students feeling supported and understood by others. The majority of the experiences coded as *support* were those in which students felt supported and understood by family members or members of their inner circle (in the cases where close relatives were not available) in both, academic and non-academic settings.

In Emily's case, her family was constituted by the other young women living with her in the university residence. For her, the support and company found in them was very important. She talked about a particular friend who was always checking in on her. Emily mentioned: “[her friend] entonces, a veces me iba a ver porque no me había visto y estaba preocupada. Entonces... y las niñas igual, como que, si uno necesita algo, lo pide” [(her friend) then, sometimes she went to see me because she hadn't seen me and was worried. So... and the other girls too, like, if one needs something, you ask]. So, for Emily, even though she is not able to live with relatives and is far away from her hometown, she found a supportive community in the young women who live with her in the university residence. This situation seems to have helped her in her transition from high school to university as well, because she found comfort in a group who shared a similar situation to hers and supported each other.

For Elisa, who lives with her mother and close to her father's family, is mostly a matter of understanding. She used to go on walks with her father on the weekends and be much more present in family gatherings. Because of the demanding university schedule, she is not as present as she would like to and she feels her parents have come to terms with this: “Es como que entienden

mucho que a veces tengo que posponer cosas por estar estudiando” [It’s like they understand very well that I sometimes have to postpone things because I’m studying]. Elisa’s parents know that her priority is to study, and they support her on this. Sebastián also mentioned having a positive relationship with his parents and felt that whenever things are good with the family, giving and receiving support, everything else is good. He mentioned:

Yo creo que igual es super importante la base, la base de uno de la familia, y si uno está bien con la familia, ‘ta bien en todo lo que uno hace finalmente, entonces es como, generalmente voy bien, no tenemos problemas, siempre es como que nos preocupamos de todos.

[I think that the base is very important, one’s base with the family, and if one is OK with the family, all is well with what one does finally, so it’s like, generally I’m good, we don’t have any problems, we always take care of each other]

For Sebastián, being in good terms with the family and feeling support from them transpires to all other areas of his life. So, for him, this relationship is particularly important. Other students, such as Valeria, acknowledge the support the family brings, but they understand that it has its limitations. When asked about how important has been her family in her school and university life, she answered: “la importancia, o sea, más que ayudarme, así como, ya hija te voy a enseñar a sumar, multiplicar, cosa como, hágalo (laughs)” [the importance, I mean, more like helping me, like, ok child I’m going to teach you to add, multiply, it’s more like, do it (laughs)]. In this short quote, Valeria was joking about how her parents were important in her academic life because they pushed her to study, more than trying to help her learn specific academic topics.

Finally, for some students it becomes hard to come to terms with their parents’ support, because they have also had issues with them. For example, when I asked Katya if she felt her

parents have been important for her academic journey, she said: “muy importante, porque igual yo creo que me ha apoyado harto [her mother], sin ellos, yo no podría costearme las cosas, no sé, igual, apoyo?” [very important, because like I think she has supported me (her mother), without them, I couldn't afford things, I don't know, like, support?]. In her case, Katya has had some issues with her parents, mostly because her mother wants Katya to be more present in her role as daughter, disregarding at times all her responsibilities as a student. Her father is not too present in her life, but he and her mother support her financially, which has become essential, especially now that she has had to stay with relatives to be able to attend university, after not obtaining a place at the university residence.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and answering research question one, for students, experiences during their time at university are not uniform; the participants embraced the positive ones and dealt with the challenges to make sense of them as they adapted to university life. Contextual differences among participants, school they attend, parents' educational background and level of support and understanding, living arrangements, just to name a few, all seem to push experiences to either side of the spectrum, between positive and challenging experiences. Accounting for these differences has been particularly difficult, especially when trying to compare students' experiences and understand some of the possible reasons that similar situations, such as trying to access university resources, create completely different experiences for students with rather similar profiles. With the aim of obtaining a more nuanced understanding of students' experiences at university and possibly making connections among the themes mentioned so far, I decided to explore at a more detailed level how students perceive their experiences at university. Results from this analysis will be presented in the following section.

6.3 Discourse analysis

In this section, I will answer research question two, and add to the findings from the previous section and the thematic analysis using complementary theoretical approaches of discourse analysis. Focusing on Appraisal and Transitivity theory, I examined how students represent and evaluate these experiences and from a CDA perspective, I explored the linguistic choices students make when reporting their experiences at university to understand, unveiling issues of power and ideologies underlying these choices (Machin & Mayr, 2012; T. A. van Dijk, 2006). Moreover, by looking at how students talked about these experiences and most importantly, the interpersonal and ideational meanings expressed through their responses in the interview, I was able to get a more complete picture of students' social world at the university and how they perceived and evaluated these participants in relation to their experiences at university. Further, it allowed me to understand how students were identifying themselves in relation to their own abilities and performance at university, and in relation to their previous selves (in school) and to their peers.

In the following paragraphs, I will provide a short description of important general characteristics of the two participants I will focus on in this part of the analysis and the program through which they entered university. I will then move on to describe, using frequencies, percentages, and some examples, the most important participants evaluated in the experiences that students reported, and the types of evaluations made by the students, Katya and Emily. I will follow with a more detailed account of the analysis, focusing on Appraisal, by participant. Finally, I will briefly summarize the main findings and how it complemented the thematic analysis on the previous section. To avoid confusion, in this section I will refer to Katya and Emily as "students"

and will use the term “participant” in SFL terms, as it was explained in the Theoretical Framework section, Chapter 2 (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

6.3.1 Background

Given that in SFL social context is as important as the structure of clauses because structures gain meaning in particular social contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & White, 2005), I will now briefly go over some important contextual aspects that are relevant to the analysis that will follow. This analysis focuses on interviews carried out with two participants who entered higher education through PACE, Katya and Emily. PACE, Programa de Acompañamiento y Acceso Efectivo a la Educación Superior [The Supportive and Effective Access to Higher Education] as it was presented in the Methodology (Chapter 4, section 3), is a program created by the Chilean government under the administration of Michelle Bachelet in 2014. This program has expanded since its conception, but it mainly offers students in participating high schools with preparation for higher education and a chance to be admitted in one of the programs of the participating universities. In 2018, this program provided 5,134 students¹² with access to higher education, based on the requirements established by the program (Please refer to section 4.3 for more details on this). However, even when students comply with the requirements and gain access to university through PACE, it is not ensured that they will get a place in one of their preferred programs, because enrollment quotas are very restricted for PACE. For example, the University of Chile limits the enrollment quota through PACE to one student per academic program, except for

¹² For reference, according to the Ministry of Education (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2018), 1,300,244 students were enrolled in higher education in Chile in 2018.

one, the Bachelor in Basic Education, for which they accept up to 10 students. This means that Emily, for example, was the only one in 2015 to enter through PACE in her academic program, and within her school, there can be a maximum of three students entering through PACE each year (Universidad de Chile, n.d.).

In the case of Katya and Emily, they had a better chance than other PACE students, because their scores received bonus points for living in cities other than the capital and for their excellent academic record in their schools. However, this did not translate to their both receiving the support they needed because they came from cities other than the capital. As mentioned, Emily came from a city in the north of Chile, and Katya from a city a couple of hours south of Santiago. Some special-access programs offer academic preparation for university during high school years, like it is the case of EDT and PACE. Concerning PACE, the time and type of preparation students receive is unclear and, official public information on this is scarce; it seems that preparation offered depends on the different agreements with participating high schools and universities, because experiences reported are varied. Katya mentioned only having access to a few courses in Santiago during the last semester of her high school years. Katya also stated having to travel to Santiago and attend classes during the weekend at a public university. There, she took math and language classes, and was offered coaching to deal with the stress and demand of university education. On the other hand, Emily mentioned she had PACE support for a longer period of time during high school, but the specific time is unclear. She did not mention attending classes outside her school, but she mentioned being presented with the idea of studying at the university early during her high school years.

As explained, given that both Emily and Katya lived outside the capital, where the University of Chile has its main campuses, once enrollment through PACE was ensured and sorted

out, they had to find living arrangements in the capital. Universities in Chile, in general, contrary to what is customary in the U.S., do not have dormitories or residences for undergraduates and, therefore, students are usually expected to relocate if they decide to apply to a university located in a city other than the one they live in, usually using their own resources and connections. For example, it is not uncommon, as it is Katya's case, for families to make living arrangements with relatives who live in the capital for their sons and daughters. Other students travel, as also Katya did on her first year, but the commute usually turns to be too exhausting to be sustained in time, and students usually end up getting a leave of absence or dropping out when no other option becomes feasible. Finding a part-time job that allows to cover the expenses of living in the city is another option; however, this option usually demands students to take fewer courses given schedule conflicts with work hours, which in turn, makes programs longer, and in some cases, more expensive.

6.3.2 Main appraised entities

Data analyzed consisted on two interviews per participant, with a total interview time for Katya and Emily of 70 and 107 minutes respectively. Taking into consideration the instances coded as instances of evaluation during the interview, I analyzed the most common appraised entities, i.e., the university of Chile, their schools, friends, classmates, family and home, PACE, and themselves. The appraised entities align with some of the codes from the thematic analysis presented in the previous section (challenging and positive experiences about academic issues, university resources, family and home). When looking at the frequency with which they talked about these entities, I found noticeable differences between Katya and Emily. Table 15 below

shows how evaluation instances were distributed by participant for the most frequent appraised entities.

Table 15 Frequency and percentage of appraised entities by student

Appraised entities	Katya		Emily	
	n	%	n	%
university and its resources	41	23	58	22.1
professors	17	9.4	24	9.16
workload and classes	33	18	24	9.16
self	17	9.4	91	34.7
family and home/univ. residence	24	13	12	4.58
other	48	27	53	20.2
Total	180	100	262	100

For Katya, the university and its resources (23%) and the academic workload and classes (18%) were the entities most evaluated during the interviews, while for Emily, her evaluations mostly focused on herself (35%). However, Emily had a similar percentage of evaluations focusing on university and resources (22%) when compared to Katya's. Based on this, there is a clear distinction in terms of what are the most common objects of evaluations for these two students. I will now move on to explore the types of evaluations present in the interviews.

6.3.3 Main type of evaluations

When looking at the types of evaluations these students constructed in their interactions with me in the interviews, other differences arose. It is important to mention that most of the evaluations coded are invoked (implicit) evaluations, which were coded based on the overall meaning expressed in the clause or sequences of clauses, which was, in turn, associated to evaluations throughout the interview. Given that the focus of this analysis was to understand main

trends and patterns in students' evaluations due to time constraints, I did not categorize evoked evaluations further into types. Table 16 shows instances of evaluation by type and student as well as a distribution of positive and negative evaluations per type.

Table 16 Percentage of evaluations per type and per student

Katya				
	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Total
% of total	45.00	31.67	23.33	100.00
Loading (%)				
+	20.99	40.35	42.86	
-	79.01	59.65	57.14	
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	
Emily				
	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Total
% of total	30.53	52.67	16.79	100.00
Loading (%)				
+	58.75	67.39	63.64	
-	41.25	32.61	36.36	
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	
Note: % of total was calculated by participant based on total number of evaluations per participant.				

Following Table 16, almost half of Katya's evaluations are evaluations of affect, involving her emotions and feelings towards the appraised entities and participants involved. These were mostly instances of affect as process and affect as quality¹³. In these instances, Katya was the emoter (Martin & White, 2005), the one experiencing the emotion, and the triggers were the different experiences, mostly challenging. Concerning the loading of the evaluations, for all types

¹³ Affect as process (mental or behavioral) e.g., The lack of resources *upset* her; Katya *cried* about her situation. Affect as quality (describing participants, attributed to participants, manner of processes) e.g., The *sad* student (Epithet); Katya was *sad* (Attribute); Katya *sadly* left the room (Circumstance) (Martin & White, 2005)

of evaluations, Katya's negative evaluations were more frequent than positive ones, while for Emily, the exact opposite was the case; In fact, more than half of all evaluations made by Katya, in all categories, were negative, Affect being the one with the most noticeable difference in loading (21% positive and 79% negative). For Emily, on the other hand, most evaluations are based on participant's behavior, what made judgments the most common type of evaluation. Concerning loading, Emily's evaluations were concentrated towards the positive side, judgements being the ones with the most pronounced difference between positive and negative evaluations, with 67% and 33% of the total number of judgements, respectively. I will now describe in more detail students' representations and evaluations of their experiences.

6.3.4 Katya's experiences through her evaluations

Based on the information presented above, it seems that Katya experienced university in a very emotional way, thus her representations show an increased use of affective evaluation when compared with judgments and appreciations. As well, the analysis shows that the majority of her evaluations were negative.

Table 17 below comprises the information presented so far for Katya's evaluations, including how the different types of evaluations were distributed for each appraised entity.

Table 17 Number of Katya's evaluation instances by entity, type of attitudinal aspect and loading

Appraised entities	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
university and its resources	6	11	4	8	3	9
professors	0	6	3	8	0	0
workload and classes	0	19	0	3	2	9
family and home	3	9	2	2	4	4
self	0	1	7	9	0	0
other	8	18	7	4	9	2
Total per loading	17	64	23	34	18	24
Total per Attitude criteria	81		57		42	

Based on Table 17, within Affect, university and university resources, workload and classes, and family and home, are the three most frequent appraised entities. In the following paragraphs, I will describe each of these categories and will use selected excerpts from the interviews with Katya to illustrate the main patterns in Katya's evaluations.

6.3.4.1 University and its resources

As mentioned, university and obtaining access to its resources was an important issue that appeared several times during the interview with Katya, which was mentioned in the thematic analysis as well. Katya was clearly affected by some bad experiences trying to obtain access to different university resources, e.g., not gaining access to university residence despite living in another region, being waitlisted for a long period of time when trying to schedule an appointment with a mental health provider through the university. In excerpts (1) to (4) below, Katya expresses and evaluates how much it affected her not being able to access mental health resources. Main annotations are as follows: **instances of evaluation**, graduation: force (raised or lowered),

graduation: focus (sharpened or diffused), t= invoked evaluation (implicit), MARKED STRESS.

Please refer to Appendix F for a complete description of annotations.

- (1) por ejemplo, yo, en verdad, muchos alumnos, tenemos **problemas emocionales, de ansiedad, muchas cosas** (affect: t, unhap; judgement: t -cap)

[for example, I, actually, many students, we have emotional problems, anxiety, many things]

- (2) y que igual te distraen mucho de lo que tenís que hacer (mental issues: affect: t, unhap; appreciation: t-val; self, considering mental issues: judgement, t -cap)

[and like they actually distract you a lot from what you've got to do]

- (3) te provocan **problemas**, y en la u tampoco hay mucha ayuda, ehm. Como lo, el [student health services center], the [Student health services center], por ejemplo, te digo ahora, **yo he intentado pedir por un mes seguido hora en el psicólogo** (mental issues: affect: t, unhap; university providing resources: t, -cap; t, -val)

[they cause you problems, and at the university there isn't much help, uhm. Like, (student health services center), for example, I'm telling you, I've been trying for a month to request an appointment with the psychologist]

- (4) Eso igual ha sido **un obstáculo muy importante** porque mi salud mental igual me está afectando para estudiar (not gaining access to mental health resources: affect: t, unhap; t, -val; self with mental issues: t, -cap)

[That has been a very important obstacle because my mental health is kind of affecting me to study]

In all these excerpts Katya makes invoked (implicit) evaluations of Affect, particularly, unhappiness in relation to her mental health issues that were, at least until the time of the interview, unresolved. Further, in excerpts (1), (2), and (4), Katya is very explicit about her mental health issues and she uses adverbs of quantity (“*muchos* alumnos”, “*distraen mucho*”, “*muchas cosas*”) probably to emphasize that this is an important aspect that, not only affects her, but many other students. In (3), she uses a prepositional phrase, also relating to quantity, in this case of amount of

time, to stress the gravity of her situation by including how long she has been waiting for an appointment. Further, in excerpt (4), Katya represents these mental health problems through a relational process as “un obstáculo” [an obstacle] and in (4) and (2) she represents these problems, i.e., having emotional and anxiety problems, mental health issues, as agents that through mental processes -“afectar” [to affect] and “distracer” [to distract]- affect the goal in these clauses, herself. The fact that she is affected by these mental health obstacles could affect her academic capacity at university. Therefore, this could explain that she represents the effects of these unresolved mental health issues by making invoked negative evaluations of judgement of herself in excerpts (1), (2), and (4). In the following quotes from Katya’s interview, she talks more about how she feels about the process of applying and failing to obtain access to university resources, specifically applying for a place in the university residence.

- (5) porque yo tenía como todos los requisitos para haberme ganado la residencia, o como la ayuda monetaria, pero aun así, nada, entonces igual es, **da rabia, da rabia**, porque según ella [la secretaria] cuando me respondieron el mensaje, me dijeron, me dijeron que son muy poca gente, que a pesar, no sé, que yo no cumplía los requisitos o algo así, entonces igual es súper raro (...) Entonces, ahí **yo me siento súper decepcionada**, porque yo tengo todos los requisitos, o sea, mi mamá no trabaja, me ayudan mis abuelos a pagar, me mandan plata, entonces **es como súper penca, porque yo de verdad como que siento que no me da nada de ayuda la universidad** (access to resources: affect: unhap, dissat; access to university resources: appreciation: -val)

[because I had like all requisites to having won the residence, or like financial help, but still, nothing, so it’s like, it make you angry, it makes you angry, because according to her (the secretary) when they answered my message, they told me that very few people, in spite of, I don’t know, that I didn’t comply with the requirements or something like that, so it’s actually very weird (...) So, there like I feel very disappointed, because I meet all the requirements, I mean, my mom doesn’t work, my grandparents help me pay, they send me money, so it’s like very bad, because I really like feel that the university doesn’t give me any help]

- (6) Igual eso también [es] **fome**, porque **me hicieron perder MUCHO tiempo, MUCHO** papeleo, me hicieron ir hasta entrevista con la asistente social, que llenar esto, llenar lo

otro, que traer este papel, que conseguirse este papel en la municipalidad, para que más encima después te digan que no, y no es tanto que te digan que no, **pero uno tiene que estar rogando** y que más encima **no sabe la respuesta**, entonces, es súper mal, como la universidad en ese tema, **no siento ayuda en nada** (university staff: affect: dissat, unhap; judgement: -cap)

[Like that also is a bummer, because they made me lose A LOT of time, A LOT of paperwork, they made me go even to an interview with the social worker, had to fill in this, fill in that, bring that document, get that paper at the municipality, to on top that to be told that no, and it's not so much that they tell you no, but one has to be begging and on top of that don't know the answer, so, it's pretty bad, like the university on that subject, I do not feel the help at all]

- (7) la asistente social con la que yo iba a hacer, con la que hacía los trámites, yo le preguntaba cómo era el proceso, y siempre tenía como **problemas**, porque **siempre habían cosas que no me decía, habían cosas que se le olvidaban (...)** fui MUCHAS veces a dejar papeles, entonces, eh, eso de **que se le haya olvidado**, no sé, siento que en verdad **no me tomaban como en serio**, como **que pensaban que esto es un juego para mí** (university staff: affect: t, unhap, dissat; judgement: t, -cap, -ver)

[the social worker with which I was going to, with which I had to do the paperwork, I asked her how was the process, and she always had like problems, because there were always things she didn't tell me, there were things she forgot about (...) I went MANY times to drop off documents, so, uhm, that she had forgotten, I don't know, I feel like, really, they didn't take me seriously, like they thought this was a game for me]

Negative instances of evaluation in terms of affect are inscribed (explicit) and invoked (implicit) at several points in these excerpts by the use of clauses such as “dar rabia” [to make you angry], “sentirse decepcionada” [to feel disappointed], and phrases such as “súper penca” ([pretty bad], “súper mal” [very bad]. As in the previous excerpts, she raises the force of her evaluations by using adjectives and adverbs of quantity such as “mucho” [a lot] and “súper” [very], expressing and stressing (through marked louder speech) how much these issues have affected her. Feelings are so much a part of how she represents her experiences, that she uses the mental process “sentir” [to feel] and the word “nada” [nothing] to explain that she has not received any help from the

university, in excerpts (5) and (6). When talking about her interactions with the social worker when trying to apply for a place in the university residence in excerpt (7), she evaluates the social worker's behavior negatively, specifically her capacity; Katya mentioned that the social worker "siempre tenía como problemas" [she always had like problems], "habían cosas que se le olvidaban" [there were things she forgot about]. Katya also uses the phrase "como problemas" [like/kind of problems]. The use of "como" or "como que" in colloquial oral Spanish has different functions and, in this case, it could be a way of graduating attitudinal evaluation, as posited by Oteiza & Merino (2012). In this case, Katya might be trying to diffuse the focus of her evaluation by using "como" before "problemas". Given that this is embedded in an instance of negative evaluation and based on what Katya mentioned in the interview about the social worker's attitude, she might be casting doubt on the fact that the social worker actually having any real problems to help her; this could be her way of implying that maybe she was just making up excuses for failing to provide her with the help she requested. The use of "como" and similar expressions will be explored later in more detail with Emily's excerpts because she uses this resource frequently.

Further, Katya also adds a negative evaluation of the social worker's propriety when stating that "siempre habían cosas que no me decía" [there were always things she didn't tell me], probably insinuating the social worker was not being completely truthful or that she might have not been disclosing all pertinent information. Added to this, it is the frequency adverb "siempre" [always] that stresses the fact that these events did not happen sporadically, but that Katya perceived this as a constant in the social worker's behavior. Thus, Katya makes the social worker directly responsible for these specific issues of not providing information or not helping her throughout the process of applying to obtain certain resources. However, in (5) she uses an impersonalization resource (Fairclough, 2003; Machin & Mayr, 2012) and talks about feeling that

“the university” is not helping her, not pointing out any specific person. I believe this is done to give extra weight to her statement, implying that this probably goes beyond the social worker’s responsibility, and it is the university’s role to fulfill students’ needs, such as her own.

6.3.4.2 Workload and student identity

Concerning the workload, Katya complained several times that the workload was too much and also talked about professors being “inconscientes” (inconsiderate), which was mentioned in the thematic analysis. Negative appreciation of the workload was also present in the survey (section 5.4), aligning with Katya’s evaluations. In the following quotes, Katya uses invoked (implicit) negative evaluations towards the workload and everyday issues, such as commuting, that affect her performance at university, and how given these circumstances, she perceived herself in her role as a student.

- (8) me ha pasado que me invitan al cine, y **me siento culpable** todo el rato por no hacer las cosas (affect: unhap)

[it has happened to me that (people) invite me to the movies, and I feel guilty all the time for not doing things]

- (9) hay que leer textos para cada clase, y estar, así como, para como después analizarlo, y te mandan tareas del texto, y puede que te manden otra tarea también además del texto, entonces encuentro que igual es **harto**. (affect: t, unhap; appreciation: -comp/bal)

[there’s texts to read for each class, and be, like, like to later analyze it, and they send you homework from the text, and maybe they can send you another homework besides the text, so I think it’s kind of a lot]

- (10) yo creo que **el desafío**, o sea, más de la universidad, yo creo que está relacionado con la universidad, ha sido como **la organización** para estudiar, porque como ya te dije, yo el año pasado estuve viajando durante más del primer semestre, viajando todos los días a Santiago, entonces eso me dejó, **me dejaba muy cansada**, todos los días cuando llegaba a mi casa, porque eran como dos horas y media para allá, dos horas y media para acá, y a veces había taco, o alguna otra cosa.... **Me dejaba súper cansada, me**

dejaba súper cansada, a pesar de que uno no hace nada cuando está viajando. (Commuting, Affect: t, unhap/dissat; Appreciation: -val)

[I think that the challenge, I mean, more like from the university, I think that it's related to the university, has been like organizing to study, like I told you, last year I was commuting for more than the first semester, commuting every day to Santiago, so that left me, that was leaving me very tired, every day when I arrived home, because it was like two hours and half there, and two and a half hours here, and sometimes there was traffic, or some other thing... It left me very tired, it left me very tired and in spite of one not doing anything when one's commuting]

(11) **TRATO de hacer todo**, pero de repente soy, yo creo que no, no, no es de, no sé si decir **floja**, pero es la **desorganización** que tengo (self: judgement: -cap)

[I TRY to do everything, but sometimes I'm, I think that no, no it's not of, I don't know if to say lazy, but it's this disorganization that I have]

In (9), Katya uses a series of clauses (linked by “and”) to list all the tasks she needs to complete for some courses. By enumerating all these tasks, it seems she is emphasizing the quantity of work she has to address, which she evaluates negatively at the end of that quote using the adjective “harto” [a lot]. Later in (10) she explains that one of the most important challenges for her has been organizing everything she has to do for the university. Just as in (9), in (10), there is an invoked negative evaluation in terms of Affect of how these issues affect her, which is mostly expressed through a sequence of ideational meanings (listing of tasks in 9 and commuting issues in 10). She appraises commuting during the first year with a negative valuation, saying it left her “muy cansada” [very tired], which she repeats three times, creating saturation (Martin & White, 2005). This negative feeling towards commuting is raised through graduating resources, the inclusion of time, “dos horas y media” [two hours and a half], to refer to the long hours she was spending commuting and the quantity adjective “todos” [all], to refer to the fact that this happened on a daily basis, not sporadically.

I asked Katya whether she took time off to relax or engage in leisure activities and she mentioned she did sometimes, but evaluated those instances with negative affect, as in the example in excerpt (8), stating that whenever they happened, she felt guilty for not working. The issue she mentioned in (10) with disorganization was brought up during the interview at other times, as in (11), when she was defining herself as a student. Katya seems to struggle to define herself in positive terms and in excerpt (11) she is not sure the word “floja” [lazy] really applies to her (“no sé si decir floja” [not sure to say lazy]). At the end of (11), she chooses a grammatical metaphor, a nominalization of the adjective “disorganized” to describe a trait she has and that she feels prevents her from being a better student. It is interesting to note that she uses the relational process “tener” (to have) to represent an attributive possessive (“tener desorganización” [to have disorganization]) and not the relational process “ser” [to be] (i.e., ser desorganizada [to be disorganized]) to evaluate herself as a student. This choice might reflect the fact that she does not think this is an inherent attribute of hers, but rather something circumstantial given the workload and different hurdles she has had to deal with.

6.3.4.3 Family relations and home

Because her immediate family lived outside the capital and she was not able to obtain a place in the university residence, Katya’s parents arranged for her to stay with some relatives in Santiago. These living arrangements allowed her to be closer to the university and she only travels home with her mother during the weekends. In the following excerpts, Katya evaluates how the experience of living with her relatives in Santiago has been and compares it with staying at her home in the south, mostly during the weekends (excerpts (12) and (13)). She also talks about her relationship with her mother and how this could improve.

- (12) acá en Santiago estoy con mi tía, mis dos primas y mi tío. Y creo que eso igual como **que me ha ayudado un poco** también, porque tengo **buena relación** con mis primas (...) entonces, tengo muy buena relación con ellas, pero de repente igual lo que te dije en delante, aunque sea familia, **no es como estar en tu casa que uno puede hacer lo que quiere, y meter el boche que quiere** y eso **me afecta más** que nada a los estudios (relationship with extended family: affect: t, sat/hap; appreciation: +val; extended family's place: affect: t, unhap/dissat)

[here in Santiago I'm with my aunt, my two cousins and my uncle. And I think that that kind of has helped me a little too, because I have a good relation with my cousins (...) so, I have a very good relationship with them, but sometimes like what I said before, though it's family, it's not like being in your home where you can do whatever you want to, and be as loud as you want to, and that affects me more than anything in my studies]

- (13) [positive things about her home in the South, living with her mother] que **nadie me molesta** cuando voy a estudiar, nadie me dice a qué hora puedo estudiar, nadie me lo va a ocupar ese espacio [her room], entonces, igual es **más cómodo** para estudiar (her house in the south: affect: t, hap; t, +val)

[(positive things about her home in the South, living with her mother)] that nobody bothers me when I'm going to study, nobody tells me at what time I can study, nobody is going to use that space [her room], so, it's kind of more comfortable to study]

- (14) Pero en mi casa, [her mother tells her] ven a ayudarme a hacer la comida, ven a ayudarme a hacer esto. Entonces igual en la casa igual ese es el **problema**. Y **yo tengo que ayudar más**. Y **yo igual, nunca le voy a decir a mi mamá que no la voy a ayudar** (her house in the south: affect: t, unhap/dissat; self in relation to her mother's requests: judgement: t, +prop)

[But in my home (her mother tells her) come help me prepare the food, come help me do this. So, it's kind of like that is the problem. And I have to help out more. And I like, I'm never going to tell my mom that I'm not going to help her]

- (15) [something than can be improved in her family] mmm... yo creo, **la comprensión igual** conmigo. Sí, porque igual de repente, mi mamá igual, es como, Katya, no, tenís que acompañarme a tal parte, o tenís que hacer esto y yo...**no entiende que** (...) o Katya, que quería, por ejemplo, el otro día que estábamos en el centro, y yo me tenía que ir, Katya no me dejís sola, que aquí. Mamá **tengo mil cosas que hacer**. Entonces, igual, sabe que yo tengo cosas que tengo que hacer cosas pa estudiar, pero igual aun

así, como que **no le toma como el peso** (her mother: affect: t, unhap/dissat; judgement: t, -cap)

[(something than can be improved in her family) mm... I think, being understanding towards me. Yes, because like sometimes, my mother like, it's like, Katya, no, you have to come with me somewhere, or you have to do this and I... she doesn't understand that (...) or Katya, she wanted, for example, the other they that we were downtown, and I had to go, Katya don't leave me alone, and this. Mom I have like a thousand things to do. So, like, she knows I have things to do to study, but even so, like she doesn't see the importance]

In (12), Katya evaluates positively in terms of affect and appreciation her relationship with her extended family, stating twice that she has “buena relación con [sus] primas” [a good relationship with (her) cousins], and raising the force by adding an adverb of degree in the second instance (“very”). She also mentions that this positive relationship has helped her, but this positive valuation is graduated by force, by stating “un poco” [a little]. Further, there is a negative instance of affective evaluation using the process “afectar” (to affect) when talking about the conditions in which she is staying there. She explains this using material processes (“hacer lo que quiere”, “meter boche”) [to do whatever you want to, to be loud] with implied negative polarity; at her home she can do all these things, at her cousins', she cannot. The latter most likely refers to that given her status as “guest” in her relatives' house, she is expected to behave in a certain way, including, for example, not to be loud. Thus, she cannot break these rules of behavior or she could jeopardize her stay there.

In contrast, in (14), she explains how she feels at home with her mother, stating that there, nobody bothers her and “es más cómodo” [it's more comfortable], expressing invoked positive affect and inscribed appreciation. However, in (15) and (16) she describes aspects of her relationship with her mother and, given that she is not a guest as in her cousins' house, she is expected to help more around the house. She mentions her mother telling her to do things for her

around the house by using the imperative “ven”. It is important to mention that it is expected in Chilean culture that given that young adults usually live with their parents during college or while they gain financial independence, especially in middle- and low-income families, they help with household tasks as much as possible. Thus, in these cases, parents have authority over their children, and it is common for them to be responsible for certain household tasks, from cleaning to watching over younger siblings. This assumed responsibility is evidenced by what I interpreted as an invoked (implicit) positive judgement in (15), when Katya says “nunca le voy a decir a mi mamá que no la voy a ayudar” [I’m never going to tell her that I’m not going to help her]. By stating the latter, she is judging positively in terms of propriety her behavior towards her mother by acknowledging her responsibility and what is expected of her in her role as a daughter, living under her parents’ roof. Moreover, by using the frequency adverb “nunca” [never], she is discarding any possibility of her not helping her mother. This adds to Katya’s problem and makes her struggle to come to terms with her responsibilities around the house and her responsibilities at the university.

6.3.4.4 Positive experiences

One of the few positive experiences that Katya mentioned, which was also mentioned in the thematic analysis of the interviews, was in relation to tutoring. As a PACE student, Katya had the option to request a private tutor outside the university, so when she realized she was struggling in one of her core classes, she talked to her PACE mentor, and asked her to find one for her. In excerpt (16) below, Katya talks about this mentoring experience after I asked her to tell me about a positive experience at university. Specifically, I asked her to explain why she felt it was a positive one:

(16) Yo creo que igual es una mezcla de todo, porque, ya, primero que nada, lo más importante fue que yo sentí **una satisfacción**, o sea, no sé si satisfacción o alegría, en que ya estaba **entendiendo**, **algo**, porque antes yo veía [academic content], y yo por más que intentaba, y veía las definiciones y todo, no entendía, entonces, y el, más encima tener el **apoyo** de la profe (tutor), que tuviera **paciencia** conmigo, sí, igual yo creo que también tenía que ver que **nos lleváramos bien** entre comillas, y que yo igual tuviera **la confianza** de decirle, no, sabe que, no, sigo no entendiendo y todo eso. Pero yo creo que más que nada, es como la satisfacción de poder saber que **logré** algo, a pesar de que no fue como una nota, pero **saber que estaba haciendo algo bien**, en realidad. (tutoring experience: Affect: +hap; +sat; tutor: t, +cap, t, +ten; self: t, +cap)

[I think that it's kind of like a mix of everything, because, now, first of all, the most important was that I felt a satisfaction, I mean, I don't know if satisfaction or joy, in that I was, understanding, something, because before I saw (academic content) and regardless of how hard I tried, and I saw the definitions and everything, I didn't understand, so, and the, on top of that having the support of the teacher (tutor), that she was patient with me, yes, like I think it also has to do with the fact that we kind of got along, and that I also had the trust to tell her, no, you know what, I'm still not getting this and all that. But I think that more than anything, it's like the satisfaction of knowing that I achieved something, despite the fact that it wasn't like a grade, but knowing that I was doing something right, really]

Katya uses a grammatical metaphor, a nominalized realization of affect as quality (“satisfacción” [satisfaction], “alegría” [joy]), to positively evaluate how she felt about this tutoring experience. Further, she lists several positive aspects of her relationship with her tutor, using a relational process “tener” [to have] with abstract possessions, “apoyo” [support], “paciencia” [patience], that come from her tutor and from which she benefits. She also evaluates her relationship with her tutor in a positive way stating that they got along, and she trusted her. In (16), going back to instances of positive affect, she repeats the word “satisfacción” [satisfaction] three times in this excerpt and relates this feeling to a mental process, “saber” [knowing]. This knowledge is tied to a positive judgement evaluation of herself: “lograr algo” [to achieve something], “hacer algo bien” [to do something right]. Thus, and based on this evidence, I believe Katya evaluated this as a positive experience because, in the end, it allowed her to see herself in a

positive way, as a student doing well at university. In other words, this tutoring experience was one of the few that she mentioned during the interview that allowed her to create a positive student identity at university. The majority of the experiences Katya talked about throughout the interview cast doubt on her abilities to be able to address high academic workload, her status of student in need of financial support, and her ability to juggle academic and family responsibilities.

Moreover, there could be a relationship between Katya's negative experiences and the way she perceives and interacts with professors and classmates; It was also a pattern throughout the interview a feeling of distrust towards professors and classmates, as mentioned in the thematic analysis. For example, when asked about how she felt about being assigned a partner for a group activity, she mentioned (17) "yo creo que... miedo, porque no le tengo confianza a las otras personas, pero no miedo porque me trataran mal" [I think that... fear, because I don't trust other people, but not fear because I think they are going to treat me badly]. Thus, in (17), Katya evaluates with negative affect having to work with other classmates and makes a negative judgement towards them, stating that she does not trust them. This could be interpreted in terms of social esteem, meaning that they are not reliable, thus, she could be using "no tener confianza" [not trusting] as a negative judgement of tenacity; on the other hand, this could also be interpreted in terms of social esteem, and it could refer to classmates being dishonest or deceptive. Concerning professors, Katya is reluctant to ask for help during class time when she does not understand, and stated that (18) "de repente uno dice, no, cómo que le voy a preguntar esta cosa al profesor, me va a retar" [sometimes one says, no, how am I going to ask that to the professor, he/she is going to tell me off]. In 18, there is negative Affect invoked, of insecurity, in the clause "me va a retar" [he/she is going to tell me off]. This could be related to Katya not feeling

comfortable enough to speak up in class, also mixed with a negative evaluation of herself, in terms of negative capacity, a feeling of insecurity in relation to her own knowledge.

Throughout these excerpts, I aimed at showing examples of the main patterns of evaluation in Katya’s discourse during the interview. In these, I aimed at showing how Katya constructed and constantly evaluated her experiences through emotions while trying to unveil what were these emotions tied to and triggered by. Given that so far, she has had impactful negative experiences at the university, especially trying to access resources, it makes sense that she would express her experiences mostly through negative evaluations, reporting only one main positive experience. In the next section I will go over Emily’s main evaluations and present examples of the main patterns.

6.3.5 Emily’s main evaluations

As mentioned earlier, for Emily, judgements were the prevalent form of evaluation during the interviews. As Table 18 shows, more than half of her evaluations are Judgements (53%), followed by Affect (31%) and Appreciation (17%).

Table 18 Number of Katya's evaluation instances by appraised entity, type of attitudinal aspect and loading

Appraised	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
university and its resources	8	7	11	7	17	8
workload and classes	2	6	6	0	6	4
professors	4	0	15	5	0	0
univ. residence	4	0	7	1	0	0
self	17	17	32	25	0	0
others	12	3	22	7	5	4
Total per Loading	47	33	93	45	28	16
Total per Attitude criteria	80		138		44	

Further, in terms of polarity, the majority of Emily’s evaluations were positive across Attitude types. Within judgement, the most frequent appraised entities were university and its resources, professors, and self. In the following subsections, I will address these evaluations providing examples of the main patterns of evaluations and I will also include a brief analysis of Emily’s insightful evaluations on the contrast she sees between her experience and the general population in her school.

6.3.5.1 University and its resources

Emily talked a lot about her school and how she felt about her classmates. In excerpt (19) she contrasts what other people say about her school and how she sees it based on her experience.

(19) [describing her school] Diría que es **un poco exclusiva**, o sea, todas las otras facultades, nos ven como, la [her school] **es a parte** (...). Tenemos un portal **diferente**, no ocupamos [university web platform], entonces **es como exclusiva**, pero también, yo encuentro que **es muy acogedora**. (her school: judgement: t, -norm; affect: t, sec; appreciation: reac, +qual)

[(describing her school)] I’d say that it’s a little exclusive, I mean, all other schools, they see us like, (her school) is another thing (...). We have a different portal, we don’t use (university web platform), then it’s like exclusive, but also, I think it’s very welcoming]

(20) [what makes it welcoming] **Los compañeros**. Al menos yo me encontré - Sé que hay un estigma como de que entran puros cuicos, pero hay **mucha diversidad** en la FEN. Como que... No sé, yo, por ejemplo, con las personas que me he relacionado yo, muy pocas, han sido como, no sé, como despectivas... como que han sido **más acogedoras**, todos estamos en las mismas, entonces... y lo **que me gustó mucho de la facultad, es que tiene mucha ayuda**. Como que... yo entré y **me ofrecieron ayuda de todo**, mira, puedes estar en el hogar, **tenemos programa de apoyo psicológico y académico, tenemos deporte, tenemos todo** esto, como que me ofrecieron todas las posibilidades en todo ámbito. No solo en uno (classmates: Affect: hap, t, sec; “muy pocas personas” judgement: -prop; “acogedoras”: judgement: +prop; university, “mucha diversidad”, “mucha ayuda”, Affect: hap; appreciation: +val)

[(what makes it welcoming) The classmates. At least I found- I know there's a stigma like they're full of snobs, but there's a lot of diversity at (her school). Like...I dunno, I, for example, with the people I hang out, very few, have been like, I dunno, like disdainful ... like they've been more welcoming, we're all in the same thing, so... and what I really liked about this school is that it offers a lot of help. Like, I enrolled and they offered me help with everything, like, look, you can stay in the residence, we have a psychological and academic support program, we have sports, we have all this, like they offered all the possibilities, in every area, not just one]

In (17), Emily acknowledges her school is different from most of the other schools within the university and that it is uncommon for other campuses and schools to have as many options and comforts as she has. She attends the School of Economy and Business, which is well-known for being a beautiful campus, with well-equipped rooms and recreation areas. Emily uses the word “exclusive” [exclusive] to evaluate her school, making thus a negative appreciation in terms of normality. Even though in other contexts exclusiveness adds prestige, which in certain sociocultural contexts can be considered as a positive and desirable quality, I believe Emily has a critical stance towards this fact; she realizes that this prestige implies having privileges in comparison to students in most of the other schools in this university. Having these privileges goes against values that are promoted within the academic community and the student movements, especially in public universities that speak of equality of opportunities for everyone. This is probably the reason that she lowers the force of this negative evaluation with the graduating element “un poco” [a little] and diffuses the focus, later in the excerpt, using the expression “como” [like]. Further, she makes “otras facultades” [other schools] the agent of the mental process “ver”, probably to create some distance with this belief and to consider it as one possibility among others. However, she then concedes that there is evidence to consider it exclusive (having its own platform) but she adds that she also finds it “muy acogedora” [very welcoming], making a positive appreciation with raised force.

When I asked her about what made her school so welcoming, she answered in (20) that it was the classmates. Again, here she acknowledges there is a negative evaluation, using an impersonalization resource, probably to conceal responsibility (Fairclough, 2003; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Further, she used the word “estigma” [stigma], which could imply that she believes is an unfair evaluation. According to this belief, most students who are accepted in this school are “cuicos”, a Chilean word used to refer to upper-class, wealthy people, who usually talk and behave in a distinctive manner (Coronata, 2016). By using the word “cuico”, Emily refers to a negative evaluation of judgement towards students in this school. She associates another concept to personas who are “cuic[as]” and says they can be “despectivas” [disdainful]. She lowers the force of this evaluation by stating that she has encountered “muy pocas [personas]” [very few (people)] behaving like that, the way “cuicos” are expected to behave when encountering people outside their circles.

According to Goffman, a stigma is “any physical or social attribute or sign that so devalues an actor’s social identity as to disqualify him or her from *full social* acceptance” (2003, p. 185). Goffman also posits that people who are stigmatized are usually so because of a physical defect, a weakness in character (e.g., having been imprisoned or committed a crime), or because they are racial or ethnic minorities. In colloquial Spanish, the word seems to convey the same meaning proposed by Goffman. However, “cuicos” usually come from a privileged background and enjoy social and economic power (Tsukame, 2016). Based on her use of the word stigma, it seems that Katya feels that students from her school, who are identified as “cuicos/as”, are not fully accepted by certain social circles within the university, and she might feel this is unjust, based on her experience. Moreover, considering Katya’s background, her history in a government foster home, I would assume her life has been deprived of the privileges she now has in this school. Also, as it

will be addressed later, she feels part of this school, then she might be conflicted to directly attack or speak badly of the students in a school that has given her so much.

Following her description of the school and its students in (20), Emily then contrasts this negative evaluation, with her own perception, repeating the word “acogedora” [welcoming], and explaining that she believes there is actually a lot of diversity on campus. It is interesting to note that in the last few lines in (20), Emily evaluates as positive some of the characteristics which make some people catalogue it as exclusive: being able to offer many resources, access to “muchayuda” [a lot of help] and “todas las posibilidades” [todas las posibilidades]. It is also important to mention that usually when Emily talks about her school in relation to other school she uses the first person plural pronoun “nosotros” [we] or conjugated verbs in the first person plural with tacit pronoun, e.g., “tenemos” (we have). This choice implies that she is representing herself as part of the community that constitutes her school (Eriksson & Aronsson, 2005; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Oktar, 2001), and not as an outsider, aligning herself with the school, which, as mentioned, could probably explain why it is difficult for her to make negative evaluations towards it. Emily experiences the benefits of being part of this exclusive community at the same time that understands how this can be seen as negative when being an outsider. The latter would make sense given her previous experiences and her living in a university residence that made her aware of other students’ realities in other university schools and campuses.

When talking about university resources, Emily’s evaluations were also mostly positive. She mentioned that when she enrolled, she was told that whenever she had questions, she could contact the Student Wellbeing Office and that they should be able to help her. Excerpts (21) and (22) are examples of these positive evaluations and how she feels about having these resources available to her.

(21) Yo, por ejemplo, cada vez que necesitaba ayuda iba a [Student Wellbeing Office]. Entonces, le preguntaba a la asistente social (...) como que **ella debería saber casi todo** (accessing resources: affect: t, sec; appreciation: t, +val; judgement: t, +cap)

[I, for example, every time that I needed help, I'd go to (Student Wellbeing Office)]. So, I asked the social worker (...) like she should know almost everything]

(22) Sí, no es como que, claro, como que eso [she can ask them anything] **me gusta mucho**, porque ha sido **una gran ayuda**, porque cualquier duda que yo tenga **yo sé que puedo ir y ellas me pueden ayudar, o me pueden averiguar** si no saben cómo hacerlo (staff: Affect: hap, sec; judgement: t, +ten, t, +cap)

[yes, it isn't like, right, like that (she can ask them anything) I like a lot, because it has been a great help, because every question I have I know I can go and they can help me, or they can figure it out if they don't know how to do it]

In (21), she positively evaluates the office, and the people working there, in terms of appreciation (+ valuation) and judgement (+capacity), in particular the social worker, stating “ella debería saber casi todo” [she should know almost everything]. The use of the “debería”, contrasted to other possible choices such as “podría”, suggests a higher level of certainty that in this office they will be able to help her, making her feel secure about the aid they provide.

In (22) she makes a positive evaluation with an inscribed instance of affect “me gusta mucho” [I like it a lot] when talking about the experiences she has had requesting services and resources from this office. Further, she represents and identifies the office with a relational process “ha sido” [has been] and the Value “una gran ayuda” [una gran ayuda]. This idea was exemplified in several instances throughout the interview. For example, as it was mentioned in the thematic analysis, when she needed to move to the university residence, she had a small time window to make the move and the people at the office helped her overseeing the details to make her transition as smoothly as possible. Therefore, she feels their help is usually prompt and reliable. In (22), there is also invoked (implied) security and happiness when she states that she knows she can go and

they will be able to help her, and even if they do not know the answer, they can figure out how to do it. This security relies on her positive judgement of the people who work at the office, mostly in terms of capacity; they either have the knowledge or know how to get it.

6.3.5.2 Professors

Emily has had, in general, very positive experiences with professors as well. In (23) she presents a general evaluation of professors and how they are usually available and open to help students, while in (24) she presents a more critical view of them, mostly in terms of power relations.

(23) Sí. **Sí me han gustado mucho** [professors in her school]. Es que... como digo, yo soy, si tengo una duda, necesito algo, lo pido. Entonces, por ejemplo, había veces que faltaba, sobre todo el primer año donde tuve que faltar algunas veces y me quedaba muy colgada, que por lo general era en estos ramos económicos porque no tenía idea de economía, yo así como le escribía un correo al profe. Profe, así como que no pude asistir, estaba revisando el material y tengo esta duda. Y el profe sí, **venga a mi oficina y hablamos** (...) En la clase uno puede preguntar, pero no es lo mismo **que te expliquen a TI**. (professors: Affect: hap; judgement: t, +cap, t, +ten; professors as available, capable, and reliable).

[Yes. Yes, I like them a lot (professors in school). It's like... like I said, I am, if I have a question, I need something, I ask for it. So, for example, there were times that I missed class, especially during first year where I had to skip class sometimes and I was so lost, that generally were one of those economics courses, because I had no idea about economics, I would like write an e-mail to the professor. Professor, you know, like I couldn't attend, and I was checking the material and I have this question. And the professor like, yes, come to my office and we'll talk (...) In class you can ask, but it's not the same that they explain it to YOU]

(24) es que considero que igual... como que este poder de negociación que tienen ellos [students in other schools], como que en la [her school] no, como que el profe hace todo, si al final, él va a cambiar la evaluación, **depende de él**, como que uno se puede quejar, pero como que este delegado representa la opinión de todos, pero si va uno solo, quizás el profe no le haga mucho caso (judgement: t, +cap; t, -prop)

[Like I consider that... like this negotiation power that they have (students in other schools), like (her school) no, like the professors does everything, and in the end, he will change an evaluation, depends on him, like one can complain, but like this spokesperson represents everyone's opinion, but if you go on your own, maybe the professors is not going to pay much attention]

In (23) there is an inscribed instance of positive affect (happiness) when she states “me ha gustado mucho” [I like them a lot]. There is also an invoked positive judgement of herself, one that is repeated several times during the interview, when she explains that she is very proactive when she has a question or needs something. So, in a way, I believe Emily feels her experiences have been positive because she has been proactive, and she has had a positive response to this. This idea can be supported by the fact that she mentioned during the interview that she has received several times positive feedback on this quality of hers. Later in (23), she explains that during her first year she had to miss some classes and then re-enacts how the conversation between her and the professor would go when asking for clarification on some topics after class. The professor's answer to her request is “venga a mi oficina y hablemos” [come to my office and we'll talk] and connotes, first, a polite social distance between professor and student by the use the conjugation of the process “venir”[come] in the second person singular “usted”; and second, a willingness on behalf of the professor to help Emily by inviting her to his office to discuss the issue. Thus, I considered this a positive invoked (implied) instance of judgement towards professors (even though she talks in the singular, I believe she is generalizing her experience), in terms of how capable (+cap) and dependable (+ten) he is. Then, Emily adds there is always the option of asking in class, but it is not the same to have someone explain something “a TI” [to you]. This stress in the word “ti” [you] is contrasting the possibility of having to explain “a todo el curso” [to the whole class] when asking during lectures. Based on the latter, it seems as though Emily feels there

is added benefit of having a one-on-one time with professors and she is happy that their professors are usually open to give that opportunity.

On the other hand, in (24), Emily again presents a critical stance, this time towards professors, which was briefly addressed in the thematic analysis. Emily explains that students have very little power of negotiation with professors in her school because they are the ones who do everything, “el profe hace todo” [the professor does everything], thus making an invoked judgement of positive capacity. However, at the same time, she is calling professors out for this. Moreover, this capacity is mostly defined in terms of power, leaving students mostly powerless in relation to the professor’s capacities. Therefore, Emily is making a negative judgement in terms of social sanction, because the professors’ power in her school is not contested nor controlled, and more importantly, it is not like in other schools where students have at least a representative who has the power to negotiate with the professor on behalf of the whole class.

6.3.5.3 Self and life at the university residence

As mentioned at the beginning of section 6.3.5, most of Emily’s evaluations made had herself as appraised entity, so instances of self-evaluation were varied and frequent during the interview. Excerpt (25) to (29) are examples of instances of self-appraisals that Emily made and that reflect she has a clear notion of her abilities and weaknesses, and approaches university life and its challenges bearing these in mind.

(25) [talking about her most important achievements] eh... **pasar todo hasta ahora** (...) y también, **adaptarme bien**. **Como que, encontré un grupo de amigos, como que, me gusta la facultad, como que estoy metida en algunos proyectos**, entonces, eso **igual es bueno**. Y también como, **el pedir ayuda** (...) **como que** eso, o sea hay gente que me lo ha dicho. (having passed all courses, adapting, asking for help: Affect: hap, judgement: t, +cap)

[(talking about her most important achievements) uhm... pass everything so far (...) and also, adapting well. Like, I found a group of friends, like, I like my school, like I'm part of a few projects, so, that is kind of good. And like, asking for help (...) like that, I mean there's people who have told me.]

- (26) Yo creo que soy una **buena alumna**. **Me gusta prestar atención** en las clases. Como que descubrí eso, **que soy mejor yendo a las clases** que estudiando por mi cuenta. (identifying herself as a good student: Affect: t, sec, hap; +cap)

[I think that I'm a good student. I like paying attention in class. I kind of discovered that, that I'm better going to class than studying on my own]

- (27) claro, en el segundo [semestre] empecé como con **el autocuidado, me conozco, sé que no puedo cierta cantidad de créditos**, porque **no los voy a pasar**, entonces, voy de a poco, y así (Affect: t, sec; judgement: t, -cap)

[sure, in the second (semester) I started like with self-care, I know myself, I know that I can't take a certain number of credits, because I won't pass them, so, I'm going slow, and like that]

In (25), Emily is talking about her achievements at the university. She includes a series of clauses that represent different achievements in her academic life at university: passing all her courses, being able to adapt herself to school, finding a group of friends, being involved in projects. All these connote positive Affect for her. Further, most of these achievements that convey positive Affect are preceded by “como que” [kind of like], which could be a way to express hesitation (Oteíza & Merino, 2012). However, it seems that Emily is probably using these resources as a way to lower the force of her positive self-evaluations, and not sound too presumptuous, which would be, in general, seen as appropriate, especially when talking to someone like me, with whom there is social distance given that we are merely acquaintances. Another example of this lowering the force of positive self-judgements takes place after the sequence of achievements, when Emily mentions “eso igual es bueno” [that is kind of good]. Here she is making a positive appreciation

of all the things she mentioned previously. Nevertheless, again, she lowers the force of her evaluation by using, in this case, the word “igual” (kind of, like). Later in the excerpt, she introduces the following positive self-judgement on her capacity to ask for help with the clause “hay gente que me lo ha dicho” [there’s people who have told me]. Here she is attributing to other people the positive judgement on her capacity to ask for help, probably to convey subjectivity in relation to this evaluation (Martin & White, 2005) and that it is not only her own evaluation but an evaluation that other people have also made.

In (26), Emily also makes another positive evaluation of her capacity as a student, but in this case, this is not graduated. It is interesting to note that from all six students I interviewed, Emily was one of the two students (out of six) who self-identified as a good student. Even though later in the interview she mentioned certain issues she was working with (e.g., being unpunctual), these did not take away from her feeling and representing herself as a good student. Moreover, she stated that she likes paying attention in class, and that she has come to know herself, and knows what works for her (going to class). The latter connotes feelings of security and happiness about herself and her academic performance, making this an instance of positive Affect.

Further, in (27), Emily is talking about taking care of herself and, again, about getting to know herself academically at university and she makes a negative judgement of her capacity in relation to taking courses at the university “sé que no puedo cierta cantidad de créditos” [I know I can’t take a certain number of credits]; she knows that to be able to do well, she cannot take too many courses. But at the same time, in (27) she is conveying positive Affect: she is certain about what seems to work for her. This is conveyed by the clause “sé que no puedo” [I know I can’t], and specifically by the mental process “saber”, which is higher in terms of certainty than other choices such as “creer” [believe/think].

From her reported experiences and the meanings we co-constructed during the interview, I think Emily has been able to understand what she needs to succeed, and most importantly, she has defined success in her own terms: she has a space she feels she belongs to, both at school and out of school, and she has come to terms with her abilities at university. All this has made her comfortable with her academic identity at university, and thus, is confident to consider herself a good student.

Emily also talked at length about her community at the university residence. She mostly made positive judgements of her roommates and positive appreciations of the community she sees in this group of university women, as it is exemplified in excerpt (28) below.

(28) [about univ. residence] **Me gusta que siempre haya lugar de conversación. La diversidad del hogar me gusta mucho**, porque somos todas de diferentes carreras, entonces hay muchos puntos de vista diferentes. Todas somos de diferentes regiones (...) A veces me costaba mucho pararme de la mesa porque hablábamos demasiado, así como de todo, como de dónde venimos, lo que pensamos de ciertas cosas. Como que siempre hay un tema de conversación. Y me gusta mucho la convivencia, como que, hay niñas que tienen **este sentimiento de comunidad**, casi como, casi **innato**, chiquillas vamos a hacer esto, o tengo esto (univ residence: Affect: hap; t, +val; women at residence: Affect: hap: judgement: t, +ten; t, +prop)

[about univ. residence] I like that there's always place for conversation. The diversity of the residence I also like a lot, because we're all from different programs, so there are many different points of view. We're all from different regions (...). Sometimes I had a hard time getting up from the table because we were talking too much, like about everything, like from where we come from, what we think about different things. Like there's always topic of conversation. And I like a lot the communal living, like, there's girls that have this sense of community, like, inherent, girls let's do this, or I have that]

In (28), Emily starts making a positive evaluation of Affect by saying that she likes that there is room for conversation and diversity in the residence. This is strengthened by the use of “siempre: [always] and “mucho” [a lot] to raise the force of her evaluations. She then presents a few examples of the forms in which her community is diverse: they are all from different programs,

have many different points of view, they come from different places within the country. These series of ideational meanings strengthen her previous positive evaluations.

In all these clauses, she uses processes in the first-person plural to identify herself with this community of women, and align with the values of the community as well (Eriksson & Aronsson, 2005; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Oktar, 2001). The latter is exemplified later in the excerpt, when she makes another positive judgement of the women living in the residence using the phrase “*este sentimiento de comunidad*” [this sense of community]. McMillan and Chavis define sense of community including four elements: (a) membership: feeling of belonging or shared sense of personal relatedness; (b) influence: a sense of mattering, or making a difference in the group; (c) integration and fulfillment of needs: feeling that the needs of the members will be met by the resources received through membership; and (d) shared emotional connection: the belief that member have a shared history, common places, time and, basically, similar experiences. All four of these elements have been mentioned in Emily’s discourse, and throughout the interview, when talking about the university residence. Moreover, Emily mentioned several examples in which members of the university community in the residence were there for each other, which was briefly mentioned in the thematic analysis as well. For example, they check on each other to know they are doing well, they lend each other school supplies, they provide each other academic support (e.g., they offer themselves to provide informal tutoring sessions when someone asks for help in a subject). The benefits of sense of community and belonging to a group have been well-established in the literature about college-goers (see, for example, Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007) and align with the positive evaluations Emily makes of her own community.

6.3.5.4 Difference with other students

Finally, Emily also reflected at different times during the interview about how her performance compared to that of her classmates, especially those who came from high-achieving, usually private, schools. In (29) she is talking about the differences she has seen in her English class, while in (30), she compares her experience during her first year with that of a student from a private school.

(29) [talking about differences between students who had learned English before coming to the university and those, like herself, who had not] Sí, como que se nota, cuando hablan. Obviamente ellos recibieron un buen inglés, una buena base. Y yo, así como que me cuesta demasiado, y ellos así como que se explayan, y les da lo mismo, porque, obviamente, saben que tuvieron una buena base (classmates: judgement: +cap) recibir una base.

[(talking about differences between students who had learned English before coming to the university and those, like herself, who had not) Yes, like you can tell, when they speak. Obviously, they received a good English, a good foundation. And I, like I struggle a lot, and they like they elaborate their thoughts, and they don't care, because obviously, they know they had a good foundation]

(30) [comparing her experience with that of other students in her school] sí, definitivamente, como que... por ejemplo yo he hablado, hablé con una niña que había ido a un colegio alemán (...) entonces como que ella sabía alemán, así como... y obviamente su, como yo le decía así, era su primer año, como te ha ido y todo, no, **bien, lo encuentro tranqui,** y yo así como el primer año estaba **muriendo** así como, como estás tranqui, así como que yo, o sea bacán por ella. Pero... y yo así... obviamente a ella le exigían en el colegio, mucho más de lo que me exigieron a mí. Ella estaba más preparada. Como que fue un golpe duro, de no exigirte nada, a exigirte todo, el primer año. (workload according to classmate: affect: t, sec; workload for Emily: affect: t, unhap/insec)

[(comparing her experience with that of other students in her school) yes, definitely, like... for example I have talked, I talked to a girl that had attended a German school (...) then she like knew German, and like... I obviously her, like I said like, it was her first year, how are you doing and all, no, good, chill, and like]

In (29), Emily evaluates her and her classmates' English language skills. She makes a positive invoked judgement of her classmate's capacity by stating "se nota, cuando hablan" [you can tell, when they talk], "ellos recibieron (...) una buena base" [they received (...) a good foundation], "se explican" [they elaborate their thought]. Further, Emily again uses twice "obviamente" [obviously] to strengthen the force of the invoked judgement on her classmates' capacity. Thus, Emily proclaims a proposition that these classmates have a better English (which you can tell by the way they talk) because they had the chance to receive a better education, ruling out other alternative positions or explanations (Martin & White, 2005). This proposition has been promoted by the academic community, especially in relation to the student protests that took place in 2006 and 2011, which has also been supported by the literature (e.g., Gallego & Sapelli (2007), Bravo, Contreras & Sanhueza (1999)) At an ideational level, it is also interesting to note the use of the process "recibir" when talking about education. This choice of words is not uncommon in both written and spoken Spanish, but it is interesting that Emily uses it because it could point to lack of agency on behalf of the students, and to how the educational system perpetuates inequality. Emily did not represent the difference between herself and her classmates in terms of intelligence or abilities; she did it in terms of a contextual circumstance (usually tied to socio-economic factors of the family) of attending a good school that gave these students the opportunity, in this case, of learning a second language.

When I asked Emily about whether she perceived a difference in terms of preparation for higher education between herself and other classmates in her school, her answer was emphatic. In excerpt (30), Emily describes part of a conversation she had with a first-year student who had attended a German school. Throughout the excerpt, Emily evaluates positively this classmate's capacity, and she raises the force of her evaluation with choices such as "definitivamente"

[definitively], “ella estaba *más* preparada” [she was more prepared], “obviamente” [obviously]. Moreover, her choice of using “definitivamente” [definitely] and “obviamente” [obviously] shows that she is proclaiming, as in (29), concurrence with the belief that there are students with very different levels of preparation in her school. She then makes a clear contrast between her experience during her first year, evaluating it with “estar muriendo” [dying], and her classmates’ response to how she was doing, “tranqui” [chill]. Thus, Emily puts these two experiences on two opposite sides of the spectrum.

Further, at the end of the excerpt, Emily makes another contrast, this time about her experience during high school, where she was demanded “nada” [nothing], and at the university, where she was demanded “todo” [everything]. Lastly, reinforcing the idea mentioned in (29), Emily does not make comparisons in terms of ability between this classmate and herself, but of circumstances; Emily chooses not to use a relational processes such as “to be” to describe these differences, but does so choosing a material process “exigir”, whose agent is people in the school and the students, Emily and her classmates, are the beneficiaries. Thus, the difference between them exists because something out of their direct control and lies in the educational contexts they were in high school.

In the following section I will briefly summarize and comment on these students’ experiences and what I was able to learn from conducting a discourse analysis.

6.3.6 Students’ evaluations: Adding to the content analysis

By finding evaluation patters throughout the interviews with both Katya and Emily, I was able to dig deeper into their contextual differences, and thus, understand what were some of the

underlying power relations, beliefs and values that shaped their contrasting evaluations of their university experiences and those involved in them.

By selecting these two students' cases, I aimed at showing the differences in experiences and their evaluations, not to make a personal contrast between these students' personalities or abilities, but to place the stress on the importance of context and circumstance. Further, even though several of the evaluation patterns addressed issues discussed in the thematic analysis, by using SFL and CDA I was able to obtain a much richer and complex understanding of what was behind these students' evaluations and how they connected to the themes previously addressed. This type of analysis and the theory behind it, supports the notion that how we perceive and evaluate our experiences is highly dependent on our socio-cultural context, our belief system and our values. Further, by analyzing students' linguistic choices when representing their experiences at university, we can start to understand the role of these elements play in how students make sense of their university journeys, or not, which in turn sheds light on issues that should be considered when providing support for special-access students. I will expand on the positive aspects of using this type of discourse analysis in the following chapter. In the next section, I briefly discuss the findings of the document analysis and how it adds to the previous findings.

6.3.7 Document analysis

Even though it was not the focus of this study, I decided to select some extracts from social media and from publicly available official documents on the three programs I focused on this study. I did so to obtain the programs' perspective on the students they aim to support and on the role the programs themselves have within the university. Table 19 below shows the number and type of documents/sources from which the analyzed extracts were taken from.

Table 19 Summary of documents and excerpts analyzed

Program	No. of documents/ sources analyzed	Types of documents	No. of excerpts selected	Publishing dates
EDT (Escuela de Talentos)	2	Official website, Facebook	7	2018; 2020
PACE (Programa de Acompañamiento y Acceso Efectivo)	3	Official dossier, inaugural speech of conference, Facebook	7	2018; 2020
SIPEE (Sistema de Ingreso Prioritario de Equidad Educativa)	3	PPT, legal decree, Facebook	7	2010; 2014; 2020
All special-access programs at U.Chile	1	Univ. news blog about special admission process	1	2018; 2020

The documents and sources included above in Table 19 are just a small sample of what is available online. As mentioned, this is just a preliminary analysis whose aim is to complement the findings presented in the previous sections by examining and understanding how students were being represented and evaluated by these programs, and by doing so, understand what were some of the ideologies behind these representations and evaluations. This analysis was guided by research question three that asked about the main representations and evaluations the programs made of their students in social media and official documents. I will now present the most relevant patterns revealed by the critical discourse analysis carried out on these excerpts.

6.3.7.1 Inclusion and quantifiable enrollment criteria

During the dictatorship, Augusto Pinochet imposed a neo-liberal agenda in the country and with it, he and his cabinet implemented a series of social reforms that included changes in education, health, and social security. The educational reform aimed mainly at transferring the cost

of higher education to families and to encourage competition in the allocation of funds in higher education (Espinoza, 2008). Thus, the educational system became dominated by private institutions and created an elitization of higher education (Espinoza, 2008).

Even though after the return to democracy in 1990 educational policies were implemented to provide more representation of underserved sectors of the population in a highly privatized and segmented higher education system, core modifications to Pinochet's reform were never made. Policies implemented in the 90s were mainly financing policies in the form of scholarships and student loans (Espinoza, 2008; Larraín & Zurita, 2008; Palma, 2013) that ultimately left thousands of students in debt (Disi Pavlic, 2018). The latter was one of the reasons students were involved in massive protests in 2006 and 2011 (Somma, 2012).

Thus, special-access programs were created as a palliative measure to address inequity in terms of access to higher education. As a result of policies implemented during the dictatorship, an important issue that has found to have a direct effect on accessing higher education is type of establishment in which students spend their high school years (Gessaghi & Llinás, 2005; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2003; Mizala & Romaguera, 1998, 2000; Tokman, 2002). Therefore, students from private high schools have a better chance at gaining access and graduating from higher education institutions. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable that all special-access programs require applicants to have graduated from public establishments. Apart from this, another commonality among programs is that they define eligibility criteria for applying based on quantifiable information, specifically in terms of grades, test scores, ranking, composite scores. For example, excerpt (1) below is an example of the criteria students need to comply to be eligible to apply to SIPEE. This was taken from a decree that established the creation of the program.

(1) Artículo 4. Una vez completado el proceso de postulación, se efectuará la preselección de los estudiantes postulantes, ordenándose de acuerdo a las siguientes variables y en el siguiente orden: Primero - Índice de vulnerabilidad escolar (IVE) del establecimiento educacional público de dependencia municipal o de administración delegada; Segundo Quintil de ingresos: se ordenarán según su pertenencia a los tres primeros quintiles de ingreso; Tercero. Ranking de notas de primero a tercero medio por establecimiento educacional. Se ordenarán en primer lugar aquellos que se encuentren dentro del 10% de los más altos promedios de su generación (...)

[Article 4. Once application process is completed, pre-selection of applicants will begin, ranking them accord to the following variables and in the following order: First, school vulnerability index of the public educational establishment dependent of the municipality, or of delegated management; second, income quintile: they will be ranked according to their belonging to the first three income quintiles; Third, grade ranking from 9th to 11th grade by educational establishment. In first place there will be those whose grade averages are among the 10% highest of their generation (...)]

The criteria mentioned in (1) for SIPEE is not that different from the one requested for PACEE or for EDT. However, it does change in complexity. For example, PACE applicants are given a PACE score based on a series of scores (high school grades, university admission test, and grade ranking based on generation average). To this, students can add bonus points for attendance, location, and program preference. It is not clear from the information obtained how much support students receive when applying but it definitely seems to be an important issue considering all the information that programs request of students and the specificity of the jargon used to explain requirements (e.g., índice de vulnerabilidad, quintil de ingreso, etc.)

In Chile, regardless of type of admission, universities currently evaluate applicants only through quantitative measures¹⁴. Universities do not have, like in other parts of the world e.g., the U.S. and some European countries, application letters or one-on-one interviews as part of the admission process. Thus, students who aim at applying to university, usually start preparing during high school to take the university admission test. Putting aside skepticism on how equitable a university admission test can actually be, currently there is no qualitative criterion in the current admission process that considers each students' potential and motivation to enter higher education institutions. Taking this to the special-admission programs analyzed in this study, the only one that has included a more personalized way to evaluate their candidates is the EDT; applicants were interviewed by a staff member and a social worker or psychologist, who were basically looking for students who aligned with their values and mission statement.

6.3.7.2 Aligning with meritocracy and defining special-access students

One of the main reasons for expanding the analysis from students' discourse to documents and social media outlets of the special-access programs was to understand how students were being represented and evaluated by these programs, and by doing so, understand what were the ideologies behind these representations and evaluations.

In this study, I consider ideologies following van Dijk's socio-cognitive definition, "shared representations of social groups, and more specifically as the "axiomatic" principles of such representations" (T. A. van Dijk, 2006, p. 115). As explained by van Dijk, ideologies are generally reproduced in the social practices of the members that hold them, and they are "acquired,

¹⁴ This has been a matter of public discussion, especially after the massive protests taken place in the country since October, 2019.

confirmed, changed, and perpetuated through discourse” (2006, p. 115). Thus, following a systematic and critical approach to discourse analysis, one can understand the structures and functions of ideologies underlying the discourse of a social group. When analyzing the discourse of the excerpts from official documents of special-access programs, I came across specific structures that aligned with the ideology of meritocracy.

Meritocracy is a concept that has been present in the current discussions surrounding educational reforms in Chile; the concept was coined by sociologist Michael Young in the 90s and refers to the idea that social classes are assigned by their achievement rather than defined at birth. In the case of education, in particular to access to higher education, Young posits that young people are chosen for advancement in the educational ladder based on tests of their competence. Then, these are the people whose attested achievement in school and later at university brings them advancement later in the world at large. Thus, a meritocratic education is grounded in a meritocratic society (Young, 1994, 1998). This notion resonates strongly in Chile. For example, a study by Landerretche & Lillo (2011) that used interview data of 4,000 people between 2007 and 2008 found that there was a positive correlation between the probability of attributing poverty to individual characteristics of the person. In other words, people were poor because of their actions and decisions; they were not living in poverty as a results of systemic inequality issues.

When discussing education in Chile, this is not too different; students are constantly being told that the only thing they need to succeed and have a bright future depends on them (Fukushi, 2010). In the documents and sources analyzed, all three special-access programs described potential and current students alluding to this merit ideology. Programs used the noun “mérito” [merit] or the adjective form “meritorio” as one of the characteristics they were looking in their applicants and future university students. For example, SIPEE y PACE used the word “meritorios”

[meritorius] and EDT has *merit* as one of its values by which they hold students accountable. However, merit is not a stand-alone idea, but it is associated to students' capacities that can guarantee their success, disregarding any contextual, socio-political issues that might affect these students' paths, e.g., social connections, linguistic varieties spoken, etc. (Fukushi, 2010).

Added to the idea of *merit*, these programs also defined students using words such as “talentosos” [talented], “destacados” [outstanding], “talentos jóvenes” [young talents], “emblemas de excelencia y esfuerzo, de conocimiento técnico y de realidad” [emblems of excellence and effort, of technical knowledge and of reality], “[con] aguante” [(with) endurance]. All these evaluations positively appraise students' capacities to a high degree. Most of these capacities are usually the result of quantifiable measures of academic achievement, such as tests, “emblemas de excelencia (...) conocimiento técnico” [emblems of excellence and effort, of technical knowledge and of reality]. In the latter, by using the word “emblema”, the program is increasing the force of the evaluation even more, given that it is not only someone who has an excellent academic record, it is someone who is the symbol of what excellence means; someone who helps define the category and who embodies all the qualities associated to excellence, in this case, academically.

The word “talent” and “talentosos” is usually used to refer to people with natural aptitudes or skills. This word appeared several times in different contexts, however, it was never discussed or explained. It is also part of what ETD stand for “Escuela de Talentos” [School of Talents]. Based on the formal definition of the word and the way it is used to describe students in these programs, it could be said that they expect potential students to have, regardless of their contexts, a natural ability for studies. However, it is not really clear what these programs mean by using this word or what are the characteristics of a talented student in higher education. It seems, as

mentioned earlier in the description of the programs, that “talent” is associated to scoring high in the quantifiable measures the programs include in the requirements to apply to their programs.

Moreover, the EDT has a code of values, which students have to sign when they are accepted in the program. This code of values is entitled “No excuses!” and appears on their website together with the program’s mission. The program identifies six main attitudes and values students should maintain while being in the program and later during university: “excelencia” [excellence], “mérito” [merit], “aguante/esfuerzo” [endurance/effort]; “superación” [self-improvement], “servicio” [service], “humildad/gratitud” [humility/gratitude]. There is a clear link between the title of this code and values such as *endurance*, *effort* and *self-improvement*. These are all ideas harbored under meritocracy; students are told that there is nothing in the way to success but themselves. All they need to do is to endure and overcome any challenges that arise.

Concerning types of evaluations, most of the characteristics special-access programs make of their current or potential students are related to capacity, as mentioned, and also to propriety. For example, the EDT expects their students to have an attitude of *service* and *humility/gratitude* towards their peers, and in general, throughout their careers. Students are expected to be grateful for this opportunity and not to waste it. This would explain the emphasis they place on self-improvement and endurance; students need to do everything in their power to succeed. Furthermore, in these documents it is rarely mentioned what are the support tools they will receive during their time in the program. In fact, the concept of *support* is part of the program title of SIPEE, but not mentioned often in SIPEE documents. These support programs are very well advertised in other websites of the university, but not directly through these programs.

Finally, students are also described in terms of where they come from. In two different documents, PACE describes students as “provenientes de contextos vulnerados/vulnerables”

[coming from vulnerable/ “vulnerated” contexts]. This is the only reference I found, apart from requiring students the Vulnerability Index of their high schools, to students’ sociocultural contexts. The adjective “vulnerable” means being capable or susceptible of being wounded or hurt (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). By using “vulnerados” [vulnerated] in relation to the students’ contexts, emphasizes that there is someone that has inflicted harm or affected these contexts in some way, without mentioning the agent. In the case of “vulnerable” [vulnerable], the programs are describing the contexts as being prone to being harmed, again, failing to account who is responsible for this. This issue of how we refer to students is extremely important; Several authors (CITE) have pointed the need to stop identifying and defining students by their contextual situations e.g., poor students. For example, Milner points out that we should focus on defining what poverty is and not allowing poverty to define students. Even though PACE is not directly defining students by their context, using, for example “estudiantes vulnerables/vulnerados” [vulnerable/vulnerated students], which not an infrequent expression, they are still placing emphasis on negative aspects of their contexts. And, as mentioned, they are not targeting or highlighting the reasons why their contexts are “vulnerable/vulnerated” nor the pervasive systems that create the inequalities these very programs are trying to solve.

In this short, exploratory critical discourse analysis of some document excerpts and social media sources, aiming to answer research question three, I was able to shed light on some of the key representations these programs make of special-access students and the standards to which these programs believe these students should be held up. Meritocracy was embedded in several of the descriptions and evaluations of students’ performance at university; students are expected to be relentless and overcome all challenges that may come their way and it is through this effort and work that they will be able to succeed and earn their rewards. Thus, it seems, at first sight, that the

purpose the programs claim to have in terms of promoting equitable education is not aligned to the representations they make of their students in these documents. In the following section, I will present and discuss the main ideas presented so far as findings from this study.

7.0 Conclusions and discussion

In this chapter, I include a summary of the main conclusions of this study and an accompanying discussion of how these conclusions relate to the literature in the area and the current socio-cultural context in Chile. I will address the main conclusions from this study, and I will discuss how these conclusions relate to previous literature on the subject and what are the main contributions from this study.

In general, this study contributed to better understanding special-access students, their needs and challenges in higher education and to identify some of the most important actors involved in their experiences. Because experiences were conceived considering a myriad of both personal and situational characteristics, this study also contributed to a more holistic understanding of special-access students in higher education, adding to the existing literature on the subject. Further, this analysis not only looked at students and how they were constructing their experiences through discourse and how they evaluated the main participants in their experiences, but also looked at the programs these students belonged to. By doing so, this study showed the importance of analyzing how students are characterized and portrayed through official and institutional channels, and how these representations can have an effect, sometimes negative, on the students these programs intend to serve. Additionally, this study contributed using a different approach to understanding experience, using a rich discourse analysis methodology.

Some conclusions and contributions mentioned in the following subsections present implications for professors, mostly at the classroom level, and address considerations they should incorporate to embrace the diversity in their classrooms. Other conclusions address issues at an institutional level and how this particular university, and others, should consider these issues to

better serve special-access students. Finally, some conclusions talk about implications for research, and how based on the findings from this study, future research involving special-access students should consider. Therefore, this section is organized considering these three different audiences in mind: practitioners, institutional audience, and researchers.

7.1 Practitioner level

7.1.1 Learning from students' challenging and positive experiences.

University has constituted a myriad of experiences to all student participants in this study and by taking a closer look at these we can learn valuable lessons to better serve these students. First, it is a well-established notion in the literature that in order to succeed in educational settings, and higher education is no exception, students need to master more than a set of skills; this means that students need to also become acquainted with the academic discourse, the culture of their own schools and university and the “codes of power” present in their higher academic communities (J. W. White & Lowenthal, 2010).

Concerning the findings from this study, challenges for some of the students interviewed arose when there were hidden expectations and assumptions concerning curricula (Flanagan Borquez, 2017; Hungerford-Kresser & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012). For example, some students were asked to complete assignments for which there were no explicit instructions to guide them. This lack of guidance left students feeling unprepared for higher education and adding to the stress of what they expressed to be an already heavy workload.

Some students also felt that in certain classes professors went superficially over some topics and concepts that some students, mostly special-access ones, were seeing for the first time. This situation left them to resort to their own devices to catch up with the rest. Situations like these, stress the need for professors in higher education to acknowledge the diversity of their study body and to make conscious curriculum and pedagogical decisions that address all students' needs, not just the majority's. Thus, university inclusion policies should include more than academic support to help these students thrive in higher education, and they should provide their faculty with the professional development necessary to adequately address these challenges in the classroom and serve all their students. Initiatives to transform university teaching to embrace student diversity and inclusion are in place at this institution (Armanet, 2017; Sobrero, 2018). However, it is not clear how widespread these initiatives are, or what is being done to promote and incentivize faculty from all schools to attend nor what type of professional development is being implemented.

7.2 Institutional level

7.2.1 Special-access students

When I was reviewing the literature, I realized the concept “special-access students” was hard to define. Given that the main purpose of creating these special-access programs has been to increase representation of populations who have been under-represented in higher education in Chile, these students can also be considered as a minority from different perspectives. The criteria for selection for these programs usually sets the perspective and they include: socio-economic status, gender, ethnic identity, mobility restrictions, among others. As included in the document

analysis, the criteria for inclusion for the programs analyzed does not vary greatly but there are some main differences and these differences create different needs as well.

For instance, SIPEE is a highly competitive program that targets students who have an exceptional academic background and can reach high, competitive scores in the national admission test but cannot afford tuition. Thus, these students usually come from above average public schools and it is not uncommon that they are second or third generation university students. On the other hand, unlike SIPEE, EDT and PACE provide students with some kind of college preparatory aid. This preparation is created to address one or two issues: (a) that schools have a different professional agenda for their students (technical schools) and therefore no university preparation is offered, as it is the case of most EDT students (Perez Núñez, 2020), or (b) the preparation they offer is not enough for their students to enter through the general admission process. Moreover, EDT and PACE students are usually first-generation university students and they come from families that are generally not acquainted with university life. On top of that, their socio-economic realities make it difficult for their families to be able to afford higher education.

Based on these generalizations grounded on the enrollment criteria of students and informed by this study, SIPEE students seem to have a slight easier path in higher education because they usually come from families where higher education is not unfamiliar. This should make their families better equipped to understand what entails undergoing university education and, this way, they can better support them through the process. As well, if students are acquainted with university culture through their families, this makes it easier to understand and adapt to this new academic experience. However, this is not that simple, because even if university experience is part of their family's culture, this may not be enough for their families to be prepared to support students in this academic process. Furthermore, even if students were able to obtain access and

compete in general admission terms (for example, obtaining a high score in the university admission test) they may still be need academic support in areas not evaluated by the admission test but included in high school curricula. As the findings from this study show, some SIPEE students also require socio-emotional support to guide them and equip them with the tools to overcome the challenges they might arise, e.g., adapting to the specific culture of their schools (Dani's case), adapting and making sense of the academic rigor of their coursework (Valeria's case).

For PACE and EDT students, the road seems a little more complicated, especially considering the little academic preparation for university they received in their schools; this is one of the reasons these programs consider pre-enrollment preparation for these students, which can vary from one semester to two or more years. Furthermore, students in these programs are usually accepted to their programs with lower admission test scores than the national average. Even though the university admission test has been greatly debated and criticized (Contreras, Bravo, & Sanhueza, 2001; Koljatic & Silva, 2010; Pizarro Sánchez, 2001), it sets a precedent on what students should already master and know by the time they arrive at university. As this study found, some EDT and PACE students struggled with some contents in their classes that were taken for granted, which were never covered in their high school curricula.

The experiences of the students who participated in this study reveal above all the great heterogeneity in the special-access student population in this university, even when just considering the three programs that it targeted. This finding points to the importance of understanding the specific needs of each subgroup of students. As mentioned in the findings, some students complained about not having access to resources but there were also students who knew resources were available but complained of not knowing how to navigate them. Understanding

these differences would allow the administration and program coordinators to offer adequate support to their students in the frequency, intensity and quality that they require to succeed in higher education.

7.2.2 Resources: Offer and navigation

Even though this study only looked at the experiences of students in a sample of the schools in this university, it was clear that resources provided, especially those related to students' wellbeing and recreation, were highly dependent on the school and its financial flexibility. This is a complex topic, as it was discussed in the discourse analysis section when I contrasted Emily's and Katya's experience navigating resources at their schools. This university has policies that are meant to ensure students have access to, for example, health-related resources that are required to be enforced across schools; however, based on students' reported experiences, it seems that implementation of these policies takes very different forms, from the amount of resources available to the quality of the services provided. It is important to consider that in Chile, and most particularly in Santiago where the students in this study were, most universities have their campuses spread throughout the city, some of which can be within walking distance, but others can be more than 15 kms.(10 miles) away from each other. Thus, having a central building or facility for all students to receive the same type and quality of resources would seem fairer but fairly unrealistic. This is one of the reasons that each school has their own center to provide their students with the health, academic, and financial resources they might need. However, as I presented earlier, Katya's and Emily's needs were similar, but Katya struggled obtaining support and information from her school while Emily had a much easier and less stressful experience navigating and obtaining support. There could be several reasons for this. For one, financial

resources available that are used to provide varied forms of student aid might be different between these two schools, affecting the actual support these students get; it is not clear from the information that I gathered where the funds come from to finance, for example, mental health aid or the university residence. Even if they received the same funds that came from a central office, the question remains as to why implementation or availability of resources is so different between these schools? As mentioned, Emily attended a faculty that is well-known for being more equipped and having more financial resources available than Katya's school. Additionally, the student body in these schools differs greatly. According to their website, around 30 percent of the students at Emily's school receive some form of financial support. The latter appears on the donation section of the website, as a way to incentivize alumni to give back to their school (Facultad de Economía y Negocios UChile, n.d.). On the other hand, close to 80%¹⁵ of students in Katya's school receive any form of financial support. So, even if schools do receive similar funding, the needs of the students, at least in these two schools, differs greatly; thus, funding for meeting those needs should be equitably.

Concerning navigating and accessing resources, the contrast was clear between Katya and Emily's experience, as well as from what other students responded. Katya and Emily both gained access through the government program PACE. Nevertheless, Emily mentioned that from the first day she was told whom she needed to talk to access these resources, while Katya had a hard time finding someone who answered her questions and support her while she was applying to university housing, for example. Other students interviewed also mentioned that they knew resources and help was available, but they were lucky they have not had the need to request them because they would not know where to go or who to ask. This speaks directly of the need to make students

¹⁵ This is based on informal reports from faculty in this school.

aware since enrollment, especially special-access students who are more likely to need them, how to navigate resources in their schools. Further, because during their first year, students are usually overwhelmed with information, details on resources and how to access them should be reiterated during the semester, shared through different channels (social media, e-mails, on-site), and frequently updated.

7.2.3 What does it mean to obtain access to university?

The University of Chile's statute is publicly available in their website and it constitutes of 15 articles. These articles mostly cover the university's mission, how this mission is intended to be achieved, its patrimony, its internal organization and general means of finance. Article 4 below mainly discusses the guiding principles of the university.

“Artículo 4°. Los principios orientadores que guían a la Universidad en el cumplimiento de su misión inspiran la actividad académica y fundamentan la pertenencia de sus miembros a la vida universitaria son: la libertad de pensamiento y de expresión; el pluralismo; y la participación de sus miembros en la vida institucional, con resguardo de las jerarquías inherentes al quehacer universitario. Forman parte también de estos principios orientadores: la actitud reflexiva, dialogante y crítica en el ejercicio de las tareas intelectuales; la equidad y la valoración del mérito en el ingreso a la Institución, en su promoción y egreso; la formación de personas con sentido ético, cívico y de solidaridad social; el respeto a personas y bienes; el compromiso con la institución; la integración y desarrollo equilibrado de sus funciones universitarias, y el fomento del diálogo y la interacción entre las disciplinas que cultiva.”

[Article 4th. The guiding principles that lead the University in the fulfillment of its mission, that inspire the academic activity and are the base of its members belonging in the university life are: freedom of thought and expression, pluralism, its members' participation in the institutional life, considering the hierarchies inherent to university work. Also considered as part of the guiding principles are: reflexive attitude, dialectic and critical in the performance of intellectual works; equity and the valuing of merit when entering the Institution, in its persistence and graduation; the development of people with

ethical and civic sensibility and of social solidarity; the respect towards people and goods; the compromise with the institution, the integration and balanced development of university functions, and the nurturing of dialogue and interaction among the disciplines it cultivates]

In Article 4th there is great emphasis placed on that its members have freedom of thought and expression and that they should engage in critical reflection and dialogue with their own and other disciplines through their academic work. This is strengthened in Article 3rd, where it is established that the university considers itself as “reserva intelectual caracterizada por una conciencia social, crítica y éticamente responsable y reconociendo como parte de su misión la atención de los problemas y necesidades del país” [an intellectual reservoir characterized by critical, and ethically responsible social conscience, recognizing as part of its mission to pay attention to the problems and needs of the country] (Universidad de Chile, 2007). Therefore, one could say that this institution focuses its work and, by doing so, that of its students, in the issues that affect the country, promoting in its student body a social conscience that is critical and ethically responsible. From these goals and the rest of the articles present in its mission, I believe this institution, as many other public and private higher education institutions, considers university experience to go beyond obtaining a degree; it places a much more complex and comprehensive value on university experience, one that deals with opening students minds to theories and works in a field of study, but also to different ways of thinking, critically and analytically, to finally be able to put their work and profession to the service of the country.

For most of the students in this study, university was conceptualized as a gateway, a pathway that changed the course of their lives and concretized opportunities that were previously only part of unspoken dreams. For most of these special-access students, university, and most specifically the degree that they will obtain and the prestige that comes with it, will allow them to have access to financial stability, better job prospects and a chance to break the cycle of

reproduction (Bourdieu, 1973; Jonsson, Grusky, Di Carlo, & Pollak, 2011). Aligning with the university's mission statement, for some of the students in the study, university experience was more than just a degree; they mentioned that being part of the academic community opened doors not only to a better quality of life and economic stability but also to other ways of thinking and living, aligning in a way to university expectations presented in the articles described above. Furthermore, for these students, university opened their minds to different realities from their own, nourished and, even in some cases demanded, a critical perspective and awareness of what were the forces and powers shaping these contrasting realities. For example, Emily mentioned:

[how she changed once she entered to univ.] estaba muy alejada de eso, entonces como que entré a la u, me ha exigido tener mi propia opinión, como que, y también tengo un amigo con el que discuto estos temas entonces es como muy enriquecedor (...) eso como que pasa, antes podía aceptar ciertas cosas que ahora no, o podía reírme de ciertas cosas que ahora no, entiendo la sensibilidad del tema, como lo complejo que es

[how she changed once she entered univ.] I was very far from that, so like I entered university, and it has demanded that I have my own opinion, like, and I also have a friend with whom I discuss these topics so it's like very enriching (...) that happens to me, before I could accept certain things that now I don't, or I could laugh at certain things that now I don't, I understand the sensitivity of the issue, like how complex it is]

In the quote above, Emily explains that, since she entered university, she has felt the need, probably due to the conversations that started to take place in her social and academic circles, to be aware of current events happening around her. Perhaps this demand for developing her own opinion was some sort of requirement to maintain membership in the communities she was interested in participating, or it could also be something that she started developing as she became interested in new ideas she came across in her university journey. Regardless of the specific motivation in Emily's case, it is important to consider that most of the experiences she reported were positive and that she also reported having all her basic needs met at university. Hence, it

seems reasonable to ponder, whether in order for this to happen, for students to have the chance and opportunity to develop a critical perspective, open their minds to new ideas and ways of thinking, they first need, to have their basic needs covered, which was not the case for all. This would be a correlation I cannot fully support with the data I collected and analyzed, but it is certainly one worth investigating further. This would mean that the university's providing students with access to fulfilling their needs (whether they be mental, financial, physical) not only affects their performance at university and their grades and overall well-being; it also affects their capacity to make university a more well-rounded and enriching experience. Additionally, some of the core values included in the university's mission statement also aim to this experience: collaborating with other fields, developing a critical and analytical stance of current sociopolitical events, orient their professions and careers towards the needs of the country.

In other words, if we do not focus on ensuring students full coverage of their basic needs, we would be making it harder for students to fulfill everything the university is aiming for. It is because of this that it becomes imperative that universities understand their responsibility towards special-access students and that it goes beyond ensuring students completion of their degrees. Universities should provide spaces for these students' voices and concerns to be heard and amplified, so that programs can be informed and adapted according to their needs. This will bring them one step closer to ensuring that students obtain full access to higher education and to all that this entails.

7.2.4 Academic identities

As is was mentioned in the findings of the interview analysis, and further analyzed in the cases of Katya and Emily, students felt a difference between high school and university, which

aligns with the literature (Flanagan Borquez, 2017; Gallardo et al., 2014; Sobrero, 2018). And they were probably warned about this even before enrolling, maybe even given tips and support to overcome these issues. But regardless of all that, going through the process and seeing themselves not do as well as they had done in high school clearly affected the way they gauged their academic potential.

As it was explained in the document analysis section, students enrolling in these special-access programs are expected to be outstanding students, and therefore, they have to be among the best in their schools to even consider applying. However, students in the study reported that when they started university, they started failing classes, sometimes felt lost, and they compared themselves with their peers who easily passed all courses. All these instances represented an important blow to their self-esteem. For special-access students, it seems that preventing students going through some of these issues is very hard, especially if we consider that the longest some of these students receive preparation before university is two or three years. Nevertheless, we can definitely provide students with the tools to be prepared to handle these changes and come to terms with their shifting academic identities. Most special-access programs provide support for these students, but they rely on students reaching back to them and asking for these tools, when they might not even know they need them in the first place or what type of help they need. Added to this, most of this support is mostly academic in nature, providing several types of remedial classes, academic skills and study habit workshops. There is no specific support or instance, outside psychological therapy, that allows students to discuss and make sense of everything they go through at university and how university has impacted their sense of self at an academic and a more personal level as well. Therefore, universities should implement constant and varied types

of support that ensures students' well-being across programs and this should be given the same level of importance than academic support currently receives.

When talking about reaching out and asking for help, Emily mentioned something important she learned from her work with special-access student in her school. She stated that:

Hay gente que no, que se margina, y que no pide ayuda. La ayuda está (...) yo creo que [no piden ayuda] por vergüenza, porque se sienten como culpables de que no estén rindiendo bien.

[There are people that no, that they marginalize themselves, and that they don't ask for help. Help is (...) I think (they don't ask for help) because of shame, because they feel guilty that they're not doing well]

Emily explains that there are some students that even though they need help, they choose not to ask for it. She feels this could be because they feel ashamed that they are not doing well. If we consider what programs expect of them, the "contracts of excellence" they had to sign to be admitted, it is not surprising they are reluctant to admit they need help. In a way, admitting to need help might be a way of admitting they were not worthy of having gained access in the first place. In this scenario, it becomes essential for programs to change this unrealistic characterization of special-access students that portrays them as invincible and capable of succeeding everything if they put their minds and effort to it. At first sight, this looks like a recipe to promote student desertion and mental and academic exhaustion. This unrealistic characterization of students not only promotes, as mentioned, a meritocratic view on education but also deprives students of forging their own university paths, one that will probably be different from their general-admission peers, but in no way less valuable or rewarding. If educational institutions and professionals support and create representations that make students see themselves as unworthy of their place in higher education and unsuccessful for not maintaining a profile of excellence, we are imposing

unrealistic standards that will continue to segregate students and hinder the diversity in higher education for which these programs were created to promote.

Additionally, based on the findings from this study, there are several social actors or agents that have an effect in students positioning and identity development in their academic higher education communities. As mentioned in the findings and at the beginning of this chapter, professors have an important role because they are, in most cases, the ones who evaluate students through formal and informal academic practices. Professors are the ones who set out the dynamic of the classroom and the ones who usually have the power to accommodate to student diversity in their classrooms. Further, classmates are also very important agents in students' self-evaluation, as it is not uncommon for students to gauge their development and academic standing based on their peers'. Thus, as mentioned in the findings, special-access students acknowledge that some of their general-admission peers easily navigate higher education while they usually struggle to academic workload and some contents. Also, higher education institutions and special-access programs have an important role in students' view of themselves as they are the entities that provide access and set the expectations of the students they accept. These expectations, if unrealistic to students' actual contexts and struggles, can prove to be detrimental to student success and the very purpose of these programs.

7.2.5 The home: Support and struggle

Several students mentioned in the interviews that life at home presented their own challenges, which added to the ones they encountered at university. Added to the process of adapting to a new environment and academic space, some students had a hard time balancing their responsibilities at home with those at the university. Sometimes, especially when they have not

experienced it themselves, it is hard for parents to understand these new academic responsibilities their children acquire at university. In other words, some parents struggle making sense of their children's role as member of their families and as a member of the university community. Further, it is common for certain families, especially underserved single-parent families, to rely on older children to share some of the responsibilities around the house. So, even though parents support and encourage their children gaining access to higher education, this change disrupts the internal structure of the household, and starts creating struggles among members.

In this scenario, it becomes important for special-access programs to provide instances for parents to become engaged in the academic community and receive a different type of aid so that they also have the tools to support students. From the programs I worked with in this study, only the EDT offers this type of support; when the students are attending the two-year college preparation, they invite parents to discuss these issues with them and prepare them as well to take this journey together. I believe initiatives such as this one are beneficial, not only for the type of information parents receive and the space that they are welcome to be part of, but also for creating a sense of community among parents. In these meetings, parents can meet people in similar situations to theirs and share experiences and advice with them, which are instances that are usually well-received and appreciated. For EDT, this is not so hard to implement, because they are a rather small program (they have been recruiting about 60 students per year); the challenge for bigger programs would be to find a way to engage parents who would like to be more involved in their children's journey.

7.3 Researcher level

7.3.1 The interview as a place for reflection

I am very thankful for students to be as open as they were and to share with me and make me part of their experiences at university. Interviews with the students in this study became a space for them to open up a part of their lives, concerns and joys, and for me to receive their candor and, hopefully, be truthful to their stories. However, many of my questions were motivated by my experiences in this institution, to which -given that I am almost twice as old as most of them are- I have given a lot of thought. Because of this, it was not uncommon that during interviews, students usually hesitated, sometimes corrected themselves, and other times they just had to take a few minutes before answering. However, they rarely seemed put off by my questions and actually seemed eager to analyze with me their experiences. From this reflection, it does not seem that students have many university-supported safe spaces where they can voice their concerns or simply just talk about their experiences. Thus, the interview became a space for them to think and analyze what they had been through since they entered university.

Additionally, at the same that I am immensely grateful for students to be willing to open up to me and make me part of some of their experiences at university, most students were also really grateful in my interest in their stories. In the consent formed they signed and in our first meeting, I made it clear that one of my main purposes was to go back to the university with my findings and try to implement changes that would benefit special-access students like themselves. This is why I sought the support of the provost to conduct this study. In a way, I became a sort of channel through which some students could either say thank you for what had been working for them or raise their concern for what was not. I think this should not be overlooked and, as

mentioned previously, universities with special-access programs should create spaces to hear their students' concerns and to implement changes and modifications to their programs based on only on research, but on their own students' reported needs.

7.3.2 Learning from students' appraising university experience

By analyzing students' representations and evaluations of their university experiences, the people they interact with and their own selves was very enlightening. It definitely took my understanding of students' issues to a whole different level, a more personal one, and as such, a more complicated and abstract as well. Appraisal is definitely a complex framework that allows to dive deep into students' interactions at university, and the power relations and beliefs that lay in the core of university structure.

When I finished the interviews with students, based on what we talked about and how they talked about their experiences, I left with particular feelings of how their journeys had been. For example, with Emily, when I finished both interviews, I remember writing in my notes that my impression was that she was doing well at university. She had challenges but she felt certain and secure of the decisions she was making. In contrast, with Katya, it was quite the opposite. I had the impression she was really struggling; she was feeling disappointed in the university and its lack of support. However, beyond the specific topics and themes, these feelings and perceptions I had of these two students' experiences, I had no real evidence of this. With Appraisal I was able to find the evidence to support some of these initial impressions, at the same time that I was able to notice in their linguistic choices how these evaluations were consistent patterns throughout the interviews as they re-creating their experiences in the interviews. Further, using CDA and SFL allowed me to reflect on some evaluations and representations and understand the complexity of

their experiences, which at first hand, I had overlooked. Because of this, it becomes important to continue doing macro/micro-level analyzes such as the one I carried out in this study in order to continue adding to our knowledge of special-student access experiences at university.

7.4 Final reflection: Current socio-political situation in Chile and its effect in higher education

As mentioned in the document analysis, in one of the articles of the university's mission statement, the establishment places in the core of its values the notion of meritocracy throughout the students' university journey. Ironically, this notion of "merit" is considered alongside the concept of "equity", to which this institution so strongly aligns with.

Students in this study showed that they were capable of overcoming difficulties, addressing their challenges, and succeed. Many had real agency in their university experiences, but even though it existed, they realized it was restricted. All students were well aware of the imperfections of the current Chilean educational system; most lived these inequities and have seen the consequences of them reflected in the contrast of experiences with some of their classmates. Many also nurture a sense of social responsibility that translates in wanting their professions to have a social impact and aim at providing support and help to underserved populations.

Students also expressed this understanding of educational inequities in many ways, but in my opinion one of the most powerful ones was in their use of phrases such as "recibir mejor educación" [receive a better education]. Most of the students interviewed talked very critically of their high school education; they realized their schools were not prepared for providing a better education and this directly affected their chances of gaining access to higher education. Actually,

a fact acknowledged by some of the programs analyzed was that the real aim concerning equitable access to higher education would be to prescind from these programs. Therefore, if they are not needed, it is because we have been able to address educational inequities from early on.

Even though this study did not take place during the massive demonstrations that started on October 18th, 2019, I feel it is important to mention that students were highly involved in these and I am positive these will have a lasting impact in their educational and professional futures. These manifestations have aimed at expressing people's discontent at the systemic inequities Chile has been subject to since the imposition of the neoliberal agenda during Pinochet's dictatorship (Fuentes & Valdevellano, 2015). The government responded to these demonstrations taking the military to the streets and to this date, police repression has been increasing in violence and hundreds of people have been injured, mutilated, abused and wrongful incarcerated. During November and December 2019, several of the foci of manifestations took place very close to the campuses several of the students in this study are enrolled in. When I contacted students for member checking, some students mentioned that they had trouble responding because they were actively involved in the manifestations.

8.0 Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study focused on only one university, and within it, just three special-access programs. A more comprehensive analysis should look at all types of admission aid and support the university offers to obtain a richer and more representative notion of experiences of special-access students in higher education.

Further, this study looked at only one university, and even though it provides new elements of qualitative nature to the discussion about higher education students in Chile (Soto, 2015), examining students' experiences in other universities will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues these students go through. This, in turn, will provide stronger support and guidance to implement nation-wide policies to support inclusive higher education practices in Chile.

Concerning data collection, using methods other than interviews, might prove useful and would help students from feeling restrained or uncomfortable when talking about complicated experiences. In the case of Katya, I noticed how she reacted so much better when we decided to conduct the second interview using voice recordings through a messaging app.

When looking at my participants throughout this study, there are definitely more students who identified as female than as male, and only one participant that identified as gender non-conforming. Therefore, future studies should try to recruit participants of a gender-wise more varied sample of students.

Finally, this study included two analytical methods, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. I was able to obtain in-depth and relevant information through discourse analysis, specifically using SFL. Therefore, there seems to be enough evidence to support the notion that

analyzing the whole data set, and future data, through SFL and CDA will prove to be worthwhile and necessary to capture the different factors that play in the representation and evaluation of students' experiences in higher education.

Appendix A Recruitment materials

Appendix A.1 Participant recruitment letter



University of Pittsburgh School of Education

Greetings,

My name is Erika Abarca Millán and I'm a Ph.D. student at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. I'm currently conducting my dissertation research that involves students who have accessed university through special admission programs.

The main objective of the study is to have a better understanding of the experiences of these students at the university, mainly related to their academic literacy practices (how they read, write, and engage in academic and non-academic settings at the university).

Even though participation is completely voluntary and there won't be a monetary compensation associated to it, participating in this research project will be an interesting opportunity of collaboration for you, in which you will be able to share with students from other programs at the university and discuss issues that directly affect them.

Requirements. To participate, you only need to comply with the following requirements:

- Be 18 years old or older
- Be a regular student at the University of Chile
- Be coursing at least the 2nd year of your program at the university (it doesn't matter if you're taking courses from earlier years or if you changed programs)
- Having entered the university through SIPEE, PACE or EDT

More details. In the next few days there will be a short meeting with those who might be interested in participating. If you would like to receive more information and attend the recruiting meeting, please click here [aquí](#).

Should you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me (epa8@pitt.edu).

Thank you very much for your time,

Erika Abarca Millán

Ph.D. candidate

School of Education

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University of Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

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Appendix B Data collection activities

Appendix B.1 Survey protocol

NOTE: Main questions are identified in bold and Display and Skip commands are written in italics.

Start of Block: Introduction

Informed consent. Do you give consent for this survey to be used as part of a research project by the Universidad de Pittsburgh, PA, USA? Your personal information will remain confidential and your answers will help inform special-access programs

Yes

No

Skip To: End of Survey If Informed consent. Do you give consent for this survey to be used confidentially as part... = No

Display This Question:

If Informed consent. Do you give consent for this survey to be used confidentially as part... = Sí

Please write your name below

Are you 18 years old or older?

Yes

No

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 18 years old or older?= No

Please select your age

Between 18 and 20

Between 21 and 23

Between 24 and 29

30+

End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: History / family context

Who do you live with? Please select your answer below.

alone

direct family (father, mother, brother(s), sister(s))

friends/ acquaintances

other

Display This Question: If Who do you live with?... = other

Please write below who lives with you

Where do you live? Please select the region you live in.

▼ Región de Arica y Parinacota ... Región Metropolitana

Display This Question: If Where do you live? Please select the region you live in = Región Metropolitana

Please select the borough you live in

▼ Cerrillos ... Vitacura

How long have you lived here?

- Less than a year
- Between 1 and 2 years
- More than 2 years

Have you lived in other cities other than Santiago?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question: If Have you lived in other cities other than Santiago? = Sí

For how long?

- Less than a year
- Between 1 and 2 years
- More than 2 years

Please select the highest educational level achieved by your parents and/or caregivers. You can include up to two caregivers.

Please select your answer below

- Caregiver 1 ▼ Primary Incomplete... Higher education complete
- Caregiver 2 ▼ Primary Incomplete... Higher education complete

What are your parents or caregivers' current main occupation/work/trade?

Please write it below

Apart from university (academic activities) and family, is there any other social circle in which you participate?

For example: community centers, sport clubs, religious centers, dance or music group, etc.

- Yes
- No

Display This Question: If Apart from university (academic activities) and family, is there any other social circle in which you participate?... = Sí

Please write the name(s) of the group(s) you participate with

Do you have a job? (paid or not; something which is not directly related to your studies)

- Yes
- No

Skip To: End of Block If Do you have a job? = No

Is it a paid job?

- Yes
- No

How many hours a week do you work? If you have more than one job, include the total number of hours.

- Less than 5 hours
- Between 5 and 10 hours
- Between 11 and 20 hours
- More than 20 hours

What type of work is it? Please briefly describe it below.

Example: I work as a salesclerk at a retail store / I work restocking shelves at a local grocery shop / I work independently selling product I myself make

End of Block: History / Family context

Start of Block: University

In which faculty or institute are you enrolled in?

Please select from the list below

▼ Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo ... Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos

Have you previously been in another university or have a degree from another university?

- Yes
- No

*Display This Question: If Have you previously been in another university or have a degree from another university?=
Sí*

Please name the institution in which you were previously enrolled and the time you were there. If you finished a degree, please write the name of the degree you obtained.

Example: Universidad Mayor-6 months / INACAP - 5 years – Commercial Engineer

When did you enter university? Please select your answer below. (If you changed programs or were previously at another university, please consider the first year you enter university after high school, regardless of institution or program you entered to first.).

- 2019
- 2018
- 2017
- 2016
- 2015 o anterior

Which year are you in your program? If you changed programs, please consider the years you have coursed in your current program.

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- Fifth or more

How did you enter university? Please select your answer below

- SIPEE
- PACE
- EDT
- Regular admission
- Other




How long is your commute from home to university?

- Less than 15 minutes
- between 15 and 30 minutes
- between 30 and 60 minutes
- more than an hour






How do you commute from home to university? Please select all that apply

- walk
- take bus or inter-urban bus
- take metro and/or metro-train
- by car or private vehicle
- taxi/uber/lyft or alike

Please evaluate the follow aspects of you **FIRST YEAR** at the university

					
	No problems	Few problems	Some problems	Several problems	Too many problems
Physical Health (considerable weight loss/gain? are you sick regularly?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental Health (Any feelings of stress, loneliness, depression, etc.?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivation to study (do you have problems to concentrate, are classes interesting?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social life (do you have time/willingness to go out with friends, family?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please evaluate the follow aspects of you **CURRENT YEAR** at the university. (if you're just starting a new academic year, please select what corresponds to the last semester you took).

					
	No problems	Few problems	Some problems	Several problems	Too many problems
Physical Health (considerable weight loss/gain? are you sick regularly?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental Health (Any feelings of stress, loneliness, depression, etc.?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivation to study (do you have problems to concentrate, are classes interesting?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social life (do you have time/willingness to go out with friends, family?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please write a concept of phrase that you associate to your experience at the university in relation to ...

Please write here your answer

Friends (text field)
 Classmates (text field)
 Content and academic load (text field)

It's a fact that all classes have different academic requirements, but thinking of an average for all classes you've taken so far,

Please select the frequency with which your professors have required you to tackle:

Likert scale: Very Frequently (100-80%); Frequently (79-60%); Every now and then (59-30%); Rarely (29-1%); Never (0%)

- Reading academic papers
- Written work
- Group work
- Oral presentations

- Labs/workshops
- Online work (using internet or online platforms such as UCurso)

Have you ever felt discriminated at the university?

- oYes
- oNo

Display This Question: If Have you ever felt discriminated at the university? =Yes

What type of discrimination was?

- oRacial/ethnic
- oPhysical appearance
- oSexual orientation
- oSocio-economic status
- oOther

Display This Question: If What type of discrimination was? = other

Please write below what type of discrimination it was

End of Block: University

Start of Block: Interviews

Display This Question: If In what year are you in your program?... = First is not selected

Or How did you enter university? Please select.... = Other is not selected

Or When did you enter university? ... = 2019 is not selected

This survey is part of a more extensive study to learn about the experiences of students in higher education, particularly special-access students. There will be a next phase of data collection that will involve interviews and a group activity. If you're interested in learning more about this study and possibly participating, **please write your e-mail below to receive more information about the study and about an upcoming meeting in the following weeks.**

End of Block: Interviews

Appendix B.2 Interview 1 protocol

University

Gaining access

- *How did you decide to pursue studies at the university?*
 - o *What factors do you think led to this decision?*
 - o *What do you think were the factors affecting that decision?*
 - o *How did you decide to study in this particular university?*
 - *Did you consider any other?*
 - *What factors led you to this choice?*

- *Was (X) your first career choice when you applied to university? If no, what prevented you from entering to your first choice? how do you feel about not being able to pursue your first choice?*

Their school – classes

General

- *Could you please describe your school at the University of Chile? (consider: location, number of classes, classrooms, number of students per class, food availability, cafeteria, normal schedule, library, places to study)*
- *In very general terms, how would you describe your time at the university?*
 - *What are the main successes you've experienced at the university?*
 - *What are the main challenges you've experienced at the university?*
- *Can you walk me through a typical day at the university? (time you wake up, foods you eat, classes you have, commute, etc.)*
- *What are your weekends typically like?*
- *If you had to describe yourself academically, ¿how would you do it?*
 - *Do you consider yourself a good student? Why?*
 - *What makes a student good? Bad?*

Social: classmates

- *Tell me about your network of friends at the university and in your major.*
 - *How small/big is your social network at the university?*
 - *How many students do you consider your close friends? Are they part of your special-access program?*
- *Do you get along with most classmates?*
 - *General-admission classmates? What factors contribute to this?*

Social: professors

- *Do you get along with professors?*
 - *What factors contribute to this?*
 - *If you need help with class-related issues, do you go to their office hours, send them an email or do you prefer to talk to the TAs?*

Classes

- *How are your classes generally? (interaction with professor, students, platforms used, types of materials used, etc.)*

- *How is information usually presented? (lectures, readings and discussions, etc.)*
- *Do you feel you understand most of the information is presented during lectures?*
- *When you don't understand, what do you do? Could you walk me through to the process of what you do, who or what you consult, and in what order?*
 - *If you use different ways, which one works better for you?*
- *Are there any particular courses more demanding for you?*
 - *If so, which one are these? What makes them more demanding?*
- *Do you have any online classes? If so, how do you feel about them? How do they compare to your other classes?*

Resources

- *Do you feel you have access to all the resources you need to succeed at university? If not, what's missing?*
 - *Are your basic needs covered (health, food, transportation)?*
 - *If yes, who covers them?*
 - *If no, how do you deal with this? How does it affect your life? your studies?*
 - *Have you ever needed special services, such as mentoring, therapy, extra financial aid, etc.?*
 - *Do you know who you should talk to or where to find that information?*

Family history/context (only if there's enough time)

- *Please describe to me the borough where you currently live (consider: streets, shops, people, public transportation, crime, etc.)*
- *Please briefly describe your family (how many people compose it, who do you get along with best/worst)*
- *Do you have any duties at home (different from school-related duties), if so, what are they?*
- *What do you like best about your family?*
- *If you could improve or change something about your family, what would it be?*
- *How important has your family been in your school/university life?*

School

- *Could you please describe your school(s)? (consider: location, number of classes, computers available, normal schedule, number of students per class, state of facilities)*
- *In very general terms, how would describe your time in school? Positive? Negative? What factors contribute to this?*
- *Do you maintain contact with teachers or friends from school? If so, with whom? How important are these connections for you?*
- *What did you like best of school? What did you like least of school?*
- *If you could change something about your school experience, what would it be?*
- *Did you feel that the topics discussed in class were relevant to you personally? Expand question replacing topics with content, experiences, values)*

- If YES, *how did that make you feel? Did it have any impact in your schooling experience?*
- If NOT, *how did it make you feel? Did it have an impact in your schooling experience?*
- *How would you describe your academic identity or how you saw yourself and compared yourself to others in school?*
- *How would you describe your role in school? Did you have a passive role (you were there mostly listening to teachers and taking notes) or did you take part in the class and engaged in active discussions with classmates? (Perhaps depending on courses?)*
- *Were you asked to speak in a certain way in school? For example, to address teachers in a specific way or to use specific words? If YES, how did these different ways of speaking were different or not to the way you communicated at home?*
- *Please describe typical language classes in school. What type of activities did you do? How did you feel about them? Were they meaningful or useful to you? Have they been useful at university? Have any other classes you took in high school have been useful at the university? If so, which are they?*

Appendix B.3 Interview 2 protocol

After identifying potential topics for narratives from interview 1, ask participants if they would like to share any particular situation linked to those topics (they can be examples of situations that they have experienced)

Once these have been covered, use the following prompts/questions:

- **Goal:** obtain information about what students consider an important goal at the univ
 - **Main question/prompt:** *Please tell me about a moment or time at the university which was particularly rewarding for you.*
 - **Possible follow up questions:**
 - *Please explain the context of the situation*
 - *How do you feel about this story?*
 - *Who else was involved?*
 - *Why was it rewarding for you?*
- **Goal:** obtain information about what students consider to be important challenges at the university and how they approach them
 - **Main question/prompt:** *Please tell me about an important challenge that you have faced at the university. It can be something you have overcome or something you are still working on*
 - **Possible follow-up questions:**
 - *What's the importance of this challenge in your personal life?*
 - *In your academic life?*
 - *How do you feel about this challenge?*
 - *Do you feel you have overcome this challenge?*
 - *If participant says s/he has overcome this challenge: how did you overcome this?*

- If participant says s/he has not overcome it: *do you have a plan to do so? If so, could you share your plan?*
 - *Does the university offer help on these issues? Have you been offered help? Do you know where to look for this help or who to talk to?*
- **Goal:** obtain information about how they feel about their academic literacies
 - **Main question/prompt:** *how confident do you feel about your speaking and writing at the university? Think about classes in which you have had to give oral presentations, or write essays, and the way in which you are using language to express your ideas.*
 - **Possible follow-up questions:**
 - *Do you feel you can easily convey your ideas through speaking and/or writing?*
 - *If YES, what makes you feel confidence in your academic speaking and writing? Have you received specific tutoring or help to develop these skills? If so, when and who provided these?*
 - *If NOT, What are the main issues? What do you think are the key aspects that make it difficult for you to express your ideas at the university?*
 - *Do you feel more comfortable conveying your ideas through writing or in spoken form?*

How do these compare with the way you conveyed your ideas in high school? Or how you do so at

home?

Appendix C Expanded tables of survey data

Appendix C.1 Frequencies and percentages of students' answers to self-assessment per type of admission and year

Year/health aspect	No/ almost no problems		Few problems		Several/ too many problems	
	Gral adm.	Special adm.	Gral adm.	Special adm.	Gral adm.	Special adm.
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Physical health						
First year	13 (54.17)	14 (46.67)	6 (25.00)	9 (30.00)	5 (20.83)	7 (23.33)
Current year	17 (70.83)	18 (60.00)	4 (16.67)	6 (20.00)	3 (12.50)	6 (20.00)
Mental Health						
First year	9 (37.50)	9 (30.00)	6 (25.00)	9 (30.00)	9 (37.50)	12 (40.00)
Current year	12 (50.00)	9 (30.00)	7 (29.17)	11 (36.67)	5 (20.83)	10 (33.33)
Motivation						
First year	7 (29.17)	12 (40.00)	14 (58.33)	11 (36.67)	3 (12.50)	7 (23.33)
Current year	13 (54.17)	13 (43.33)	5 (20.83)	10 (33.33)	6 (25.00)	7 (23.33)
Social life						
First year	15 (62.50)	15 (50.00)	5 (20.83)	7 (23.33)	4 (16.67)	8 (26.67)
Current year	16 (66.67)	15 (50.00)	4 (16.67)	10 (33.33)	4 (16.67)	5 (16.67)

Note. Percentage is considered per year/health aspect within each admission group. Gral. Adm= General Admission; Special adm.= Special Admission. Total no. of general admission students=24, total of special admission students= 30. Highest % per admission group per year are in boldface.

Appendix D Expanded tables of coded experiences in interviews

Appendix D.1 Frequencies and percentages of coded experiences in interviews by type

Code	Total	
	n	%
Challenge	201	100.00
Academic	87	43.28
Quality of life	31	15.42
School resources	40	19.90
Social	21	10.45
Family/home	22	10.95
Positive	129	100.00
Academic	17	13.18
Achievement	33	25.58
Quality of life	14	10.85
School resources	27	20.93
Social	11	8.53
Support	16	12.40
Family/home	11	8.53

Note: Percentages are considered using number of counts in each given subcategory over total counts in each of the two major categories. Highest % and count per category are in bold.

**Appendix D.2 Frequencies of coded experiences in interviews per participant and by
Special Access Program**

Code	EDT			PACE			SIPEE		
	Elsa	Sebastián	Total	Emily	Katya	Total	Dani	Valeria	Total
	N	N		N	N		N	N	
Challenge	32	42	74	32	30	62	42	25	67
Academic	13	19	32	14	11	25	14	16	30
Quality of life	1	6	7	8	10	18	4	2	6
School resources	7	10	17	6	5	11	8	4	12
Social	7	3	10	4	0	4	5	2	7
Family/home	4	4	8	0	4	4	9	1	10
Positive	41	16	57	29	9	38	23	11	34
Academic	2	4	6	6	1	7	4	0	4
Achievement	15	4	19	6	1	7	5	2	7
Quality of life	3	1	4	3	1	4	3	3	6
School resources	4	1	5	12	2	14	4	4	8
Social	6	3	9	0	1	1	1	0	1
Support	6	2	8	1	1	2	5	1	6
Family/home	5	1	6	1	2	3	1	1	2

Note: Frequencies in bold are highest within program totals

**Appendix D.3 Frequencies and percentages of coded experiences in interviews by main
type and participant**

Code	P1		P2		P3		P4		P5		P6		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Challenge	32	15.92	32	15.92	40	19.9	42	20.9	30	14.93	25	12.44	201
Academic	13	40.63	14	43.75	14	35.00	19	45.24	11	36.67	16	18.39	87
Quality of life	1	3.13	8	25.00	4	10.00	6	14.29	10	33.33	2	6.45	31
School resources	7	21.88	6	18.75	8	20.00	10	23.81	5	16.67	4	10.00	40
Social	7	21.88	4	12.50	5	12.50	3	7.14	0	0.00	2	9.52	21
Family/home	4	12.50	0	0.00	9	22.50	4	9.52	4	13.33	1	4.55	22
Positive	41	31.78	29	22.48	23	17.83	16	12.4	9	6.977	11	8.527	129
Academic	2	4.88	6	20.69	4	17.39	4	25.00	1	11.11	0	0.00	17
Achievement	15	36.59	6	20.69	5	21.74	4	25.00	1	11.11	2	18.18	33
Quality of life	3	7.32	3	10.34	3	13.04	1	6.25	1	11.11	3	27.27	14
School resources	4	9.76	12	41.38	4	17.39	1	6.25	2	22.22	4	36.36	27
Social	6	14.63	0	0.00	1	4.35	3	18.75	1	11.11	0	0.00	11
Support	6	14.63	1	3.45	5	21.74	2	12.50	1	11.11	1	9.09	16
Family/home	5	12.20	1	3.45	1	4.35	1	6.25	2	22.22	1	9.09	11

Note: Percentages are considered using number of counts per participant in each given category/subcategory over total counts in that subcategory. Highest % per participant is in bold.

Appendix E Code Description

Appendix E.1 Codes for challenging experiences

Challenging experience	Code	Challenging experiences related to...
Academic	ACAD	activities or skills that are directly related to the completion of their degree
Assignments	ACAD:ASSIGN	academic activities, usually graded, that students need to fulfill as part of their course requirements. E.g., oral presentations, essays, readings, reviewing subject content
English	ACAD:ENG	reading and understanding required texts (written or in some other form) in English
Organization	ACAD:ORG	lack of or issues with organizational skills to address academic workload e.g., how to prioritize between tasks, how to organize time to address tasks
Professors	ACAD:PROF	engaging with, understanding, and /or communicating efficiently with professors at the university
Skills	ACAD:SKILLS	issues with acquiring/developing skills that will help them at university, e.g., how to address study time, how to address an audience (oral presentations and in class conversations), how to efficiently and effectively take notes in class
Workload	ACAD:WORKL	the amount and difficulty of homework and evaluations assigned as part of regular coursework
Quality of life	QoL	Students' overall well-being
Mental health	QoL:MENTAL	mental wellbeing, involving issues triggered or not by academic work/life, e.g., stress, anxiety, depression.
Physical health	QoL:PHYSICAL	physical wellbeing of students, e.g., irregular weight loss/gain, untreated/undiagnosed illnesses, problems sleeping, being ill for long periods of time
Leisure	QoL:LEISURE	lack of leisure time to engage in activities outside the university
Commuting	QoL:COMMUTE	home-to-university travel issues, including time, expenses, and transportation availability
School resources	RES	resources provided by the university to facilitate student life in academic, and non-academic areas
Food	RES:FOOD	access to or quality of food available on campus
Infrastructure	RES:INFRAS	state, quality and appropriateness of campus infrastructure e.g., classroom size and seat availability, study rooms, library
Technology	RES:TECH	availability, usefulness and user-friendliness of technological resources available e.g., university web platform, computer programs required by curriculum, access to borrowing equipment such as calculators, tablets, computers.
Navigation	RES:NAVIG	availability and clarity of information related to resources available, including information on what resources entail, cost (if any) for the student, contact information, and location of resources.

Scholarships	RES:FINAID	different types of financial aid offered by the university e.g., meal stipend, monthly allowance for photocopies, access to university residences for out-of-city students, among others
Tutoring	RES:TUTOR	availability, quality and frequency of tutoring sessions for student to review or strengthen core subject areas.
Social	SOC	socialization issues, mostly with classmates
Classmates	SOC:CLASSM	issues engaging with/relating to classmates in academic and non-academic activities. Students feel classmates are different from them
Discrimination	SOC:DESCRIM	feeling having been discriminated by classmates, professors, or staff based on race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status.
Segregation	SOC:SEGREG	feeling having been segregated by classmates, professors, or staff based on race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status.
Family/home	HOME	issues happening at home or with family
Communication	HOME:COMM	lack of communication with family members or miscommunication issues with them
Relationship	HOME:RELAT	poor relationship with family members e.g., constant arguing and fighting with family members
Support	HOME:SUPP	insufficient or lack of support from family members e.g., lack of understanding for having to stay at university until late
Neighborhood	HOME:NEIGH	characteristics of neighborhood that are perceived by students as negative or deficient: unsafe, bothersome neighbors, noisy, etc.

Appendix E.2 Codes for Positive experiences

Positive experience	Code	Positive experiences related to...
Academic	ACAD	activities that are directly related to the completion of their degree
Professors	ACAD:PROF	engaging with, understanding, or communicating with professors at the university
Classes	ACAD:CLASS	students feeling the class environment and dynamic was good and conducive to their learning
Achievements	ACHIEVE	students' accomplishments at university. These experiences are catalogued as achievements based on answers to question that specifically asked for achievements at university
Academic	ACHIEVE:ACAD	academic accomplishments, e.g., passing a course, obtaining a good grade, receiving praise for work, test, assignments
Skills	ACHIEVE:SKILLS	skills developed/mastered at university that have been beneficial for students to be successful at university, e.g., organizational skills, note-taking skills, etc.
Social	ACHIEVE:SOC	being able to establish a social network at university e.g., making friends from their special access program, making friends outside their special access program, being on good terms with tutors and staff at the university. Feeling of belonging to their respective academic communities.
Quality of life	QoL	Students' overall well-being
Mental health	QoL:MENTAL	mental wellbeing, involving issues triggered or not by academic work/life, e.g., finding ways to cope with and/or seeking help to fight stress, anxiety, depression
Physical health	QoL:PHYSICAL	physical wellbeing of students, e.g., finding solutions and ways to deal with irregular weight loss/gain, untreated/undiagnosed illnesses, problems sleeping, being ill for long periods of time
Leisure	QoL:LEISURE	leisure time to engage in activities outside the university
Commuting	QoL:COMMUTE	home-to-university travel issues, including time, expenses, and transportation availability
School resources	RES	resources provided by the university to facilitate student life in academic, and non-academic areas
Food	RES:FOOD	access to and quality of food available on campus
Infrastructure	RES:INFRA	state, quality and appropriateness of campus infrastructure e.g., classroom size and seat availability, study rooms, library, availability and usefulness of technological resources available, including web university platform and computer programs required in the curriculum
Tutoring	RES:TUTOR	availability, quality and frequency of tutoring sessions for students to review or strengthen core subject areas.
Access/navigating	RES:ACCNAV	availability and clarity of information related to resources available, including information on what resources entail, cost (if any) for the student, contact information, and location of resources.
Social	SOC	socialization
Diversity	SOC:DIVERSITY	students feeling their campus and classes are diverse in terms of the student body, enriching their experience at university
Classmates/Friends	SOC:FRIENDS	having a support network at university constituted by friends
Support	SUPP	feeling supported and understood by others
Family	SUPP:FAMILY	feeling supported and understood by family members, in academic and non-academic settings

Classmates/Friends	SUPP:CLASSFRIEND	feeling supported and understood by classmates or friends, in academic and non-academic settings
Family/home	HOME	issues happening at home or with family
Communication	HOME:COMM	healthy communication with family members or people in their inner circle
Relationship	HOME:RELAT	good relationship with family members, feeling close, and understood by family or people in their inner circle

Appendix F Description of annotations for discourse analysis

Annotation	Description
+	positive attitude
-	negative attitude
des	affect: desire
hap	affect: un/happiness
sec	affect: in/security
sat	affect: dis/satisfaction
norm	judgement: normality
cap	judgement: capacity
ten	judgement: tenacity
ver	judgement: veracity
prop	judgment: propriety
reac	appreciation: reaction
comp	appreciation: composition
val	appreciation: valuation
t	invoked attitude
*	irrealis affect
neg	to mark grammatically negated feelings or evaluations (as opposed to lexical negations)
<u>Simple underlined</u>	Raise or lower force
<u>Double underlined</u>	Sharpen or diffuse focus
(.3)	Pauses longer than 3 seconds
CAPS	Stressed words or phrases within clauses

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