

College Children of inland Uruguay: the case of Gladys´R.

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Abstract: The effects of decentralization of Uruguay’s college educational setting and the resulting opportunities for students from lower socio-economic classes are explored using a multimethod design. Analysis of quantitative data, including family income and educational level, and place of origin documented that many students in the rural college differed significantly from the more traditional students from urban areas and higher socio-economic classes. The case studied of Gladys R. provided more insight into resilience and aspirations. Qualitative data using life story explored the experiences of fifteen students, their expectations, obstacles, and adaptations choosing the one named above for this specifically study.

Keywords: qualitative, quantitative, mixed method, Uruguay, college students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A country standard of living is strongly associated with its population educational level. Over the last thirty years, there has been a clear advance in formal educational levels around the world; first at the elementary level, then at the high school level, and in the last years, college entrance rate has steadily increased. According to the yearly UNESCO report from 2010, worldwide educational advance grew from three million in the 1960s to 158 million by 2008, of which 51% is female (UNESCO, 2010). Likewise, the Latin-American enrollment number rose in the last few years from 11,500,000 students in 2000 to 17,757,000 in 2009. Colleges note that this increase includes new types of students and two relevant problems arise. The first one is that we are far from accomplishing the levels of admission to advanced education in developed countries. Thus, in 2010 there is a rate of 38% of college enrollment in Latin America (López, 2011) in contrast to 89% in the United States in 2009. Also, Uruguay is above the average rates of its continent, with a college enrollment rate of 68% (UNESCO, 2009 in López, 2011).

The second problem involves the negative discrimination of the most socially and culturally vulnerable groups (indigenous people, African-descendants, lower income populations).

Some of the main challenges that advanced education in Latin America and the Caribbean must face today are: the rapid growth of privatization, insufficient public financing, lack of access for the lower income population, the weak investment in Research + Development + Innovation, the scarce scientific production, and the continuing low enrollment rate, despite its recent improvement (Didriksson, 2008 in López, 2011).

Latin American universities have worked to meet this need. In Uruguay, where only one public university existed until recently, a regionalization plan of public college education was developed and carried out. This plan included the strengthening of the existing decentralized services, such as the North Regional of the University of the Republic, and the creation of new educational institutions in the inland, and Regional University Centers.

This growth and transformation of college education is similar to college systems throughout the world, as described Francisco López (2008), particularly in two aspects. First, mass enrollment has greatly increased in the last thirty years as a result of the high enrollment rates of elementary and high school levels. And second, there is inequity of access due to ethical, religious and social class reasons. This occurs despite UNESCO’s declaration stating since 2009 that:

“The expansion of access has become a priority in most Member States and the rising participation rates in Superior Education are a significant global tendency. Nevertheless, great disparities persist that conform a source of greater unsettlement, Governments and institutions must promote the access of women and the participation in every educational level, as well as warrant access and success.” (UNESCO, 2009. Free translation)¹

¹ "Expansion of access has become a priority in most Member States and increasing participation rates in higher

Uruguay has addressed this concern through the previously described regionalization programs, among other socially inclusive programs. The objective of the current study is the presentation of a humane face of the social impact of the decentralization policy. The study quantitatively describes the population who is most affected by the reform, analyzes the life stories of affected students with emphasis on changes, and explores in depth a paradigmatic² case, Gladys R's life story.

II. OBJECTIVE

The specific study is aimed to describe, on its first stage, the quantitative aspects in its socioeconomic variables, of the students of Universidad de la República – Regional Norte to compare them with the census data of the totality of the university population, as a way to observe differences that exist because of the geographical location of the University. On a second stage, after the differences between both population had been detected, the investigation will try to understand the performance of new students phenomenon qualitatively, by studying their life story, particularly the case of Gladys R. to know the reasons that she most outstand for her performance.

Quantitative component

Method

A mixed method was used. First, the quantitative component involved an analysis of existing census data and a current survey of university students. Then, fifteen life stories were collected from low-income students, who had been purposively selected as students from low socioeconomic level homes that are located in villages in rural regions, and have scarce cultural capital. After analysis, we next selected Gladys R's story as representative of the population identified as "new students" to the university in the last few years.

The quantitative component involved two sets of data: the regional data collected through a survey in 1999 and repeated in 2012, and University general census data from 2007 and from 2012. The study of Noboa 1999 produced some interesting findings which motivated our further studies, presented on the next paragraph.

The next study carried out during 2012 in the North Regional University Center (NRC) explored the socioeconomic characteristics of the students, as well as their evaluations of different services provided by the institution. Through a random sample of class groups, with a 5% margin of error, 622 self-administered forms were distributed to students who had used different university services provided by center³. The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, PASW Statistics 18) to analyze frequencies and cross tabulations. These data show that many students are of low socioeconomic level, have parents with only elementary education, and whose original residency are small towns on the inland area of influence (Artigas, Salto, Paysandú, Río Negro, Tacuarembó y Rivera).

In order to examine possible changes over time, an analysis of secondary information from the University Students General Census (VI in 2007 and VII in 2012) and the survey data from 1999 (450 cases) were explored to compare the finding results with the total university population.

Results

In the north area of the country, the students' geographic origin was an interest case of for analysis. Those born outside central cities represent a significant majority of students who attend the North Regional Center compared with the total of the university population throughout the country. And, in the last few years, they have even outnumbered those born in the cities in the interior. As can be observed in the following chart, 53% of the students were not born in the city where the university is located (Salto) and only 38,6% were born outside the capital city, Montevideo. It is evident that the North Regional Center does not draw only local students, which is evidence of a first impact of the decentralization and development process the University has had in the interior.

education are a major global trend. However, large disparities persist that constitute a source of greater inequity. Governments and institutions should promote women's access and participation at all levels of education, as well as ensure access and success. "(UNESCO, 2009).

² Emblematic case.

³ The universe of approximately 5000 students comprehended.

Table 1: Students geographic origin in relation to the place where the university is located.

Chart 1: Students geographic origin in relation to the seat City

Students (%)	2012** NRC	2007*** University	2012**** University
Born in the seat city	47	60	58,5
Born out of the seat city	53	37	38,6
Total		100*****	100*****

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Note:** Poll taken by North Regional Center (NRC) students,

*** VI Students general census U de la R,

**** VII Students general census U de la R,

***** There's a 3% of students born abroad.

At the same time, by investigating the places that differ from the place where the university is located, for the north region of the country, the survey carried out in 2012 shows that 23% of the North Regional Center students were born in small villages in the interior (provinces), whereas at national level, only 1% of the university students come from those towns. This is clear evidence of the impact of the decentralized process in regard to geographic origin.

Chart 2: Students geographic origin in relation with the provinces capital city

Students (%)	2012** NRC	2007*** University	2012**** University
Born in non-capital town	23	1	Without data

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Note: ** Poll taken by North Regional Center students,

*** VI Students general census University of the Republic (U of the R),

**** VII Students general census U of the R

Table 2: Students geographic origin in relation to socioeconomic level.

If we also observe this rural origin in relation to the socioeconomic variable, we note that most of these students come from places of a low socioeconomic level. There is evidence of increased access and use by students of lower economic levels who are from the innermost places of the country. As displayed in the following chart, 60.9% of the students who come from those places are beneficiaries of college scholarships.

Table 3: Inland students' access to scholarships.

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	Percentage
Yes	60,9
No	37,7
Does not know/does not answer	1,4
Total	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the student's poll, 2012

The availability of the scholarships allows students to leave their cities of origin and likely enhances the permanence of these migrating students from their hometowns to the places where the universities are located. This is even more impressive when we analyze this information with other social and economic characteristics of these students, such as being the children of rural workers, descendants of economic and culturally poor families. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that the impact of decentralization affects not only those students present, which does mean a great change, but more importantly also affects the future of those who are located on the lower levels of the social strata. In this regard, these student's access to university is believed to constitute the tip of the iceberg in the upcoming social changes.

If we focus on the educational level of the household heads of those who live in the inland, we notice that 37.7% only achieved elementary education or have no formal education, whereas for the total university population this variable is 9.5% (University general census, 2012) and when applied to the North Regional Center it climbs to a 24.7% (Regional survey data, 2012). The data indicates once again the differences within families of the student body.

Also, it is worth observing the differences of the percentage of students whose household heads had tertiary level and/or college education: 26.7% for those studying in the NRC, 45.6% for the entire college population, and barely 16.7% of those students who come from small villages in the interior. This is another piece of information that documents the impact of decentralization. The University is reaching many students from low educational level homes, and these students are the first generation in their families to access college education.

Table 4: Educational Level of Household heads of students from the interior.

Chart 4: Educational Level of Household heads of students from the interior.

Educational level of Home heads	Percentage
No formal education	0,8
Elementary	36,9
2nd stage of Basic Education	20,3
High School	21
Tertiary/College/ university	16,7
Does not know/ Does not answer	4,3
Total	100

Source: own elaboration based on Student Survey, NRC, 2012

Qualitative component: Gladys R., an example of a “Transition”⁴ Student: from rural workers’ daughter to university student.

Method

From the previous quantitative studies, relevant cases were detected, to continue searching qualitatively for the original characteristics of the analyzed University Centre students; and on a third stage twenty students were intentionally selected, to whom qualitative interviews were made, with the purpose of gaining access to

⁴ 4 Rama, G. On the cited study, he originally called this category as “mutants”.

their most important educational accomplishments. From this, one case was selected to build the educational story, the case of Gladys R. Later, the investigation strategy applied on this stage will be describe.

The origins of the use of personal documents for research are found in the investigation carried out by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1919) published under the title "The Polish Peasant in Europa and America". The authors based their investigation on personal documents, letters and documents that the Polish immigrants in the US exchanged with their countrymen in Europe. These documents "(...) intend to capture the subjective point of view of the individuals, with the explicit project of building, leaning on these individual subjectivities, a scientific sociology that will be able to distinguish and theoretically construct social types" (Mucchielli, 2001, p.85).

The investigation uses letters, newspaper articles, court archives, priests' speeches, political parties' flyers, among others, as analysis material. Any document that reflects the social life of the moment and the mental states of the subjects can be included.

The unique contribution of these authors was their resistance to the use of the main techniques of the moment: observation and interview. The authors claimed that both techniques influenced and manipulated the interviewees, and prevented the actors from showing themselves as they were.

The qualitative component of this project consisted of life stories and life histories, analyzed with qualitative content analysis. An important distinction is made between the stories told by the students in their life stories and the life history as an interpretative construction by the researcher, using additional data. In order to collect the rich details of the life stories of students representing the lower classes, it was necessary in this setting to use interviews.

Life history, one of the most complex techniques used in social qualitative investigations, uses data collection techniques such as qualitative in-depth interviews, observation, and documents.

The life history method uses three components: the use of personal documents, interviews, and qualitative content analysis. Starting from the individual life stories, the history of a specific social unit (organization, neighborhood, city, town, etc.) or a single part of its life (childhood, youth, etc.) can be developed. Daniel Bertaux (1976) is notable for use of this biographic method in Sociology.

Life history building techniques are not independently applied, and the triangulation components is crucial. What is collected by one technique can be crosschecked with the information provided by the other two.

The qualitative content analysis, when used for the construction of life histories, is centered on the reconstruction of different stages in the subject's life and the meaningfulness of personal milestones. What is more, a chronology of the facts that serve as temporal context is usually attached to the report.

The narrative and analysis of a series of cases based on biographic interviews is presented in order to provide context to the study.

Fifteen North Regional students were interviewed, male and female, different ages and careers, all of them coming from unfavorable socio-cultural contexts; took place during August, September, and October 2013.

Through them, we explored interrelated and multi-casual processes, including education policies, university policies, socio-cultural family context, university inter-institutional cultures, learning process, daily education training and other dynamics both psychological and social.

Interviews were designed for two purposes: one section involved the characteristics of the students' family of origin, as well as their education history and of their family referents; and the second section collected the interviewees' experiences in the North Regional University setting.

The first section includes the residence prior to their university studies; the family composition; their referents' occupations; the characteristics of the family head; the employment of the student; working hours (in case of positive answer to the former question); benefits of college scholarships; their experiences in elementary school, high school and any other education system they might have attended; education related stories from their family referents; highest achieved education levels; reasons that related to starting college education; reasons that they choose the North Regional specifically; family support regarding their stay in college; reasons for choosing their career; previous information on the career; and their expectations.

For the second section, data were related to their connection with the different institutional sessions and extra-curricular activities; links with tutoring and academic companionship programs for students; expectations about college life; obstacles they might have confronted; as well as modifications of their lives since beginning university.

Based on these variables, the analysis of the interviewed students' stories were carried out in order to examine their life trajectories within the education system, and the role the family plays in the student's life.

This phase of the study involved the reconstruction of the vital trajectories of the life histories of the students who, even though their origins were very much less favored than others, they still entered, and many of

them have even completed, their university studies, overcoming every difficulty, economical or cultural, they encountered. From these histories, we developed documentation of low profile social change and stories of what is happening in students' classrooms and homes (Noboa and Robaina, 2013).

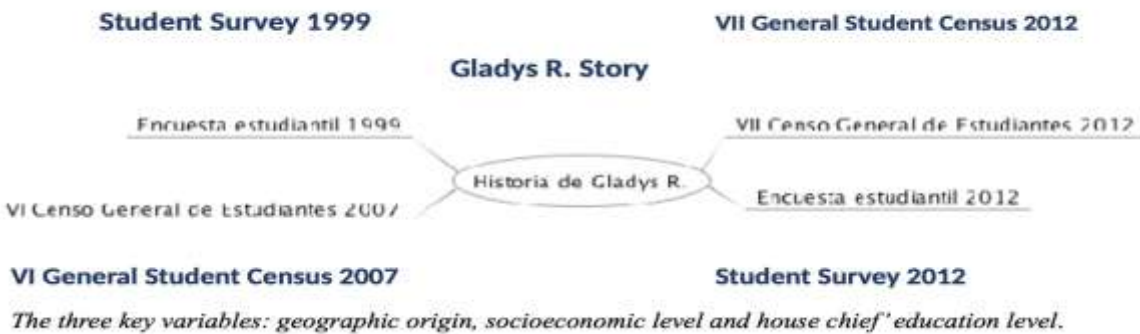
From the biographic stories we analyzed, it is noted that the students who today attend college and come from a family context of low cultural capital levels demonstrate that the initial contexts in young people's lives do not impede the accomplishment of the development of a professional career, as discussed by Bourdieu & Passeron (2009). This is evidence of "... the socio-cultural transformation capacity of the educational system through the production of knowledge in the lowest social strata" (Rama, 1992, p.137).

From that collection of stories we have selected Gladys R's Life Story, a paradigmatic case that intends to show in great depth the phenomena extensively described in the former extract. We have completed more than six hours of recordings with the interviewee, which allowed the supply of a great amount of material for the interpretative reconstruction of Gladys R's life story.

The Illustration 1 describes the strategy constructed for this investigation.

Illustration 1: Investigation strategy

Diagram N°1. Investigation strategy



Interviews with Gladys were distributed over six work sessions; three in April 2015 and the other three in September of the same year.

The objective in this case is to generate knowledge regarding the presence of a student coming from the mentioned contexts into the university system. In order to accomplish that, data are collected from several aspects of her life story referring to different socialization agents, highlighting the family, followed by the elementary education stage, peer group, high school and, finally, college education, trying to recover those life experiences that have marked, defined or conditioned her experiences to the present day, as it can be observed in the following Illustration 2.

Illustration 2: Socialization agents and goals.

Diagram N°2. Socialization agents and goals:



Results

This analysis explores the apparent deterministic, limiting effect of the socio-economic characteristics of rural students on their potential achievements, as expressed in Illustration 2.

The life stories we explored are primarily individual stories but are not unique. They are evidence of the students' capacity of resiliency, who even when born under problematic conditions, manage to take advantage of the opportunities that the institutions offer in order to overcome their initial situation and prepare for a better life.

Gladys R., our case study, had a special path: child of an army soldier, born in urban Montevideo but immediately moved along with her family to a rural context where her parents started to work.

Gladys said:

"I was born in Montevideo and then the rural environment comes, we rode horses to school; on the way from our house to the school ran a small creek on the way back, when it was very hot, the (pony) horse stayed in the water".

"Since I was very small they encouraged me to study, (my dad) never wanted to be a rural employee, he wanted to be a teacher but he never made it. He didn't want to be there at first, even though he likes it now. So he encouraged me to study, him even harder than my mom".

Her family provided the needed support to encourage her to continue her academic studies within the scarcely socioeconomic situation. Her father's desire of getting professional education and the parents' concern for their kids to live in a better situation than life offered them, worked as a motivator for the social transformation in this case.

The social investigation made in Uruguay is conclusive (Rama, G. 1992) on pointing out the roles of parents on the educational performance of their children. What stands out is that previous studies pointed out the educative level of the mother as the driving force of the favourable education results on their children. On this particular case, not only isn't the mother but the father, and with a very low level of study. He couldn't finish 2nd primary, as we will see later.

Childhood and family

Even though her father had gone into the military for a while, the family later settled in a typical rural environment in the countryside dedicated to the rural activities.

She describes her family environment as: "The family context was made up of my parents and brother; we lived in the countryside and at first, I liked it, it was all I knew".

Her family of four members, parents and brother, were aware of acts of violence; something that came up often in their close relatives comments: "one such as the other had strong personalities and neither would be trampled on".

In spite of this, Gladys R., who always shows great admiration for her parents, does not hide that feature from her home, somehow displaying it as a natural component in her daily relations. In the same way, she values the effort they make: "my parents were making a sacrifice so that we could study".

It's interesting to note Sartre's (2000) perspective, which is a dialectic interpretation of the world; understanding that human relations within a social environment, conditions the individuals. Sartre states (2000): "(...) men make history by themselves in a given environment that conditions them". To that Engels (1956) men make history based on previous, real conditions; but it is they who make it; and not the former conditions (...)" (Sartre, 2000:75)

From this perspective it could be said that even though this young woman's economic-familiar environment could have limited her future life success, it did not act as an absolute determinant, given that she managed to overcome her limited socioeconomic condition and to advance herself into a different socioeconomic level than that experienced by her referent relatives.

This is why it is necessary to take into account that according to Sartre (1989), in the so called "Life Project", the anticipated outlining of fate makes reference to a certain way of leading life. The nature of human beings is that of building projects, and projecting that being in the future. Through this "Life Project", human beings set goals, which will be achieved according to each individual and their surrounding outer world.

The case of a student viewing college studies as part of her or his life project is possible but, since life outcomes are partly determined by social structures, certain contradictions can often coexist between what Sartre (2000) proposes as "field of wills" and "field of possibilities". That is, there is a difference between what is wished for and the real possibilities of accomplishment, given that the "possibility field" is conditioned by each person's socioeconomic reality.

From Gladys's words (from her parents legacy) her strong character conditions her life and acts as a true engine to drive her out of the social disadvantageous situation in which the starting point of that long life road of university life lies, where not everyone enters, and to which not everyone succeeds.

Memories of her life in the country are filled with the strong presence of socially differentiated classes and particularly great inequities exist in this given context.

“That one time we were coming to school with mom and the creek had over-flown because of the rain, the rancher told his daughter: hold Gladys’s hand and carry her bag, that bag had all my clothes, she was wearing flip flops so when the water took out one of them, she dropped my bag into the water and started looking for her flip flop, because her grandma had brought it for her from the U.S.A. That marked me, it was all my clothes for the entire week and it got all soaked”.

Gladys’s experience did not reproduce her family’s experience, but rather a different alternative. In his book, *Critics of Dialectic Reason*, Sartre (2000) states that individuals’ acts are affected by historical conditions and nature as well as individual acts of freedom. Family often influences young people’s choices, from the economic, emotional or motivational point of view. The influence of her parents allowed her to project into the future she is living now. This is expressed in her speech:

“(…) I always kinda knew what I wanted to do (…) back then there was always somebody counseling and guiding me (…) I think the first encouragements some people give you are crucial”. “My parents really motivated me to study in order to stop being poor”

Gladys R. family does not differ from the other families of the rural environment, normally low resources and working on establishments near their houses doing rural tasks. The exception it showed by the emphasis they put on the educational future of their daughter as a way to go out of poverty. The truth is that this opportunity is possible because of the presence of secondary and university institutes in the region, central issue of this article, otherwise it would be impossible for these families.

The real impact that the decentralization actions had in our country marked a “before and after” on inland youngsters. Thus, can be said that the territorial distance to Montevideo and the economic resources, are no longer the only determinant components to reach a university degree.

School and High School

The decision of staying in the education system is not always an individual decision, but also involves the youngster’s closest, surrounding environment including the family background and direct actors such as teachers.

Teachers appear as a center piece in Gladys’s schooling trajectory, in this case as main motivators. Teachers and educators in general had an important place in Gladys choosing an educational path, either because of their teaching abilities or the affectionate companionship they offer students, proof of which is the following quotation:

“Nancy (headmistress) would always listen open-mindedly, we would talk about the future and what to do... I liked it”

The teachers reinforced the family’s point of view of the importance of student’s continuing in the education system. Their influence also involves the family group in general, mostly when referring to small town residents. Distance to the education center is a determinant in continuing education because of the daily effort in which, from the very beginning, children are asked to sacrifice part of their time and strength to get to school.

Gladys carries on with her story:

“(…) I finished the second term of first grade in Parada Herreria. By second grade we moved to the Arapey Hotsprings, where I finished second, third, fourth and fifth grade. From there we moved to Baltasar Brum, Artigas Department. We often rode horses to school”.

Obligatory education in Uruguay from elementary to the third year of High School, which includes nine years of study, has been mandatory since the second half of the sixties. In cases in which the reasons why parents had drifted away from the education system were stated, family causes were mentioned as well as the need of early entry into the labor market. In this regard Gladys explains:

“My father had to drop out of elementary school in third grade, after his mother passed away. My mother finished sixth grade but also dropped out due to some family difficulties”.

“(…) in my family just the first grade, my father didn’t even finish third grade, due to family complications”.

“(…) later on he had to quit studying because he had to start working”

In the past in Uruguay only minimal levels of education were needed to fulfill the functions of a productive system that did not require greater knowledge or complex skills.

In the last few decades there has been a significant transformation in education as a social institution, and there have been certain changes in its value by society. This may be due to the former prioritization of other aspects of daily life such as getting a job at an early age, the caring of the youngest in the household by the older kids, and particularly for women, the support in all the house chores.

However, currently the production system requires better educated and qualified people, and therefore a greater educational level than before is required.

Our country's middle class today dictates that if young people wish to achieve success, they must remain in the education system longer than previously. This situation does not fit well with the lower socioeconomic class realities, although this situation is being targeted with inclusive education policies nationally.

These changes are also due to the modification of the paradigms from which they arise, that family's realities and labor market are no longer what they used to be in previous decades (Cardozo, 2008).

Related to that, young interviewees express:

"(...) the stories they tell me about how school used to be... It was very different from now". "(...) my dad told me teachers would hit them with rulers (...)"

In many cases the reasons that drove students into starting a certain college career are associated with personal qualities, the taste for studying and desire to obtain professional education, what is linked to the current production system.

"Since very young, I've liked to study (...) I consider that by being young you need to get a specialization in something, because nowadays every job requires a career or course or something, and otherwise it'll make it very difficult for you and the payment is minimum when you have no education of any sort"

"(...) I would like to get a degree in the future; to be a professional".

Another aspect worth remarking on is the motivation to help others; besides improving themselves, these young people do think of their classmates' welfare, an aspect that is fulfilling for them and which they carry out cheerfully.

"I've always liked the policy of helping other partners as needed, if they got something out of it, the poorest".

The peer group and religion

It's well understood the role of peer groups on the youngster's personality formation, this could be explained as the success or fails on them. When Gladys talk about her peers in general, claimed:

"They weren't in for studies. I rejected the way they talked, they manner in which they expressed themselves".

Gladys recognized that she was different from her peers, they had less cultural capital who used rude language, and who did not care about school assignments. She stated: "the best students in school were 4 or 5 tops, and we all are currently studying".

She found a partner with whom she talked a lot:

"We were both great students, we were the class's flag bearers. A person who meant a lot to me was the school headmistress, she backed me up every time, she was very open- minded and aware of my situation."

As we can see on data, one of the fundamental pillars on Gladys R. education were her teachers, who also lived on a rural environment. She attend to a rural school and highschool, as you can see the normal overcrowding of city highschools would made imposible this personal support. This support allowed her to develop a vindication ability she often used to defend what she believed to be fair.

There is another socialization agent that played a relevant role in Gladys's life, beyond her peer group: religion. She stated:

"The fatherly and motherly figures were always there for me, so was my brother. Friends, I've never had any, I don't believe in friendship, I've only ever had a partner and we were there for each other. I greatly believe in Jesus, I've been Evangelist from birth. Church helps you to face problems, talking to God helps me; it makes me stand taller in my decisions I've always attended cult, there's meetings every day, I try to go every time I can, I have a radio show and preach when I have to. The bible explains what's currently going on. Reading the bible helps understand the Social Work career. Religion marked me from a very short age and maybe kept me from clubbing and social life".

The presence of transcendent knowledge works in this case as reinforcement of her former socialization with family, school, high school, and selected peer groups, cooperating in her career choice.

Without underestimating the role played by the religion in Gladys's life, she recognize the reading habit she gain through it. Can't be forgotten that those families had a low cultural capital and maybe the bible was the only book of the house. This religious phenomenon that differ from the Catholic Church is recent and poorly studied. Its impacts aren't known yet, except from the support on our sociologists community of Carlos Marx's precept (1968) "*La religión es el opio de los pueblos*". Also it can be related the work of Max Weber, "*La ética*

protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo” (1976) where the author talks about the effects that puritans ideas can have on life, economically speaking, of people who adopt a sacrifice attitude that influence their daily life to achieve the goals in life, not after it.

College

Gladys originally had two options (Psychology and History Teaching), but she chose the alternative of Social Work, partly due to feasibility reasons. Also, this is where very strong features of her personality converge: doing good unto others, and her spirit of sacrifice. Parallel to this, the habit of reading the bible fit perfectly to the study of social sciences, including long, dense reading.

Referring to college life, Gladys recalled:

“Well, I was actually going to study Psychology, but since we didn’t have that career in Salto and I had to move to Montevideo, it would be very difficult for me. I then considered History Teaching that can be done here, it was only later that I chose Social Work, that is one of the things I like most.”

The choice of pursuing a college career was a new possibility for students such as Gladys. In no case would the students represented by Gladys have entered college had the University not developed activities in the inland, offering studies readily available within their social and cultural realities.

Another key part in this process of university integration are the scholarships “Fondo de Solidaridad” and “Bienestar Universitario” that allow the sustainability both financial and nutritional. In relation to this Gladys says:

“Since always I’d been saying that I’m going to live in Montevideo, but I think I will never do it. I have the two scholarships because my time schedule is very tight, I can’t go to San Antonio only to have lunch and return.”

Gladys highlights the University of the Republic’s Participation and extension activities as an integrative element, as a formative element of contact with other group members and the communities.

“In first grade we didn’t really know each other well and we went to Flor de Ceibo, that’s where we got better acquainted and learned to work in teams. We got to know each other, to learn how to work with adults. They were eager to do something in the village; they were enthusiastic and liked us being there”

Becoming part of a group provided her with the opportunity for social interaction as a component in her personal and social development (Blumer, 1966). The experience of being in a group shaped areas of daily life, including the values and objectives that, when joined with Gladys’s great resiliency, assisted with her transformation from her rural origin and that social structure to making her way in college with certain aspirations of transforming her life.

“I dislike being ignorant. University was a nice experience where I got to learn a lot. I’ve always liked reading and my first book was the bible. While in college not just reading but also searching for the information in context and interpreting it”.

With her maturing process she contemplates social regulation options and recognizes the critical thinking contribution that she has gained from college. College education provided her with the confidence to engage in political action. In addition to this activity, she also joined groups, formed her political conviction of life and her critical view of society. As can be seen here, far from being a status quo reproducer, the university promotes deep social transformation; Gladys’s case seems to be a paradigmatic example.

“People that won’t study have no idea of what politics are, however those that come here (to college) understand why to support a party”.

To sum up, Gladys’ career choice was greatly influenced by access to the university, strong family support (particularly from her father), followed by support given by her school and highschool teachers, a selected group of peers, religion as a personality agent with a strong spirit of sacrifice, and the formation of a reading habit.

The Future

The view of future is influenced by overcoming a socially disadvantageous situation in favor of a vision of a future more favorable socio-economic, decorous life.

“I never liked being poor, studying is the way out. I do not want to be poor!! I like studying, it’s just tiresome to come and go from where I’m currently residing. I want my own house, my own car. I’m a family person and love helping the needed whenever possible”.

That image of the future and the goals pursued are typical of the Uruguayan character of someone who has lacked so much for so long. In a country that does not boast great luxuries, but encourages a simple yet dignifying way of living, it emphatically demands a way out of its current condition. College education is essential to that, and people is aware of this, also recent government policies. Gladys states:

“To keep on studying in order to make progress in life, help my family and always study. To graduate and get a post-graduate degree”.

“Studying is my thing, getting a nice job, deciding on my free times, and not depending on any man. I would like to work for an INAU center, as a Social Worker, not working in something other than my field of studies. It’s not about the money either, but about doing what I studied to do”.

The latest data from the United Nations Development Program report that Uruguay is ranked in first place in social equality levels, which is seen in the example of Gladys R.

Finally, regarding the express purpose of escaping male domination, a strongly preset idea within the Uruguayan society and the contexts from which Gladys R. comes, her convictions appear vigorous and clear, made possible by the economic independence achieved with a good job and a college education.

III. DISCUSSION

The data reported in this investigation describe the effects on students caused by the access to University from the implementation of the decentralization policy which has high impact on the access and sustainability of the students through policies of financial support developed by “Fondo de Solidaridad” and “Bienestar Universitario”.

Furthermore, Gladys life story shows support from her father, teachers, friends and religion, that somehow made possible her insertion and development at the University.

However, ¿what have we been told by sociological studies? Bourdieu and Passeron (2009) don’t believe the fact that a rural worker’s daughter could gain access to university or even finish her studies. With regards to this, they develop their theory of “Los Herederos” breaking with the thesis developed by Durkheim (Durkheim, 1991) about the integrator role that the education has on the society, and they support (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2009) the reproductive role of education on the social stratification. In other words, the direct correlation between home cultural capital, socioeconomic origin and educational development.

On the other hand, Rama (1992) has detected with his investigations that in Uruguay a different phenomenon is taking place, qualifying this socially fatalistic statements of french authors. This relates to the presence of another group of students that achieved

different results from the expected, according to the French author hypothesis, he called this group as “mutants” and explain their educational success because of their mothers cultural capital and the support she gives to their children to overcome the sociocultural disadvantage.

Recently, in Uruguay Boado (2010) return to the hypothesis of Bourdieu and Passeron (2009), specifically to investigations that were made here in Salto (city where the University is located) and Maldonado, another inland city. With his studies, he concluded that the students parents of this cities had vocational training, this statement is emphatically contradictory to what we are supporting on this article.

The case of Gladys (as her the others students that were studied) has given clues for future studies that deserve to be named:

First of all, what her store life means, not only for the mother, but for the father, who was the driving force of her results, the role of her teachers, public educators, this is an aspect praised by Rama (1995).

The privilege, explained by Bourdieu and Passeron (2009), that some students are naturally selected by the educators, constituting a group of virtuos that boost its members to reach sistem goals. Once more, this is an hypothesis validated in this article.

Another aspect is the unknown factor until this moment, the religious component on Gladys life. Like we previously claimed, the “new Churches” phenomenon, that has spread all around Latin América and Uruguay isn’t an exception, it has to be considered unprejudiced and with more attention on its impacts. Its effects on social integrity, influences on the rise, decrease or reproduction of the social inequality process and eventually, the emergency of a culture that promote the improvement of social status, boosting or not their own personal attitudes towards life and the advantage of what government policies can offer since a few years ago.

Last but not least, check out the differences found in the investigations leaving room for debate and studies that allow keeping forward. This article attempt to detail the factors that combines on the process: government policies, mesosocial aspects involving familiar and educational institutes, religious organizations and microsocial components that form part from people’s daily life.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the first part of this investigation and in agreement with the Latin American tendencies en cuanto a la descentralización de las universidades, it can be observed that a great percentage of the North Regional Center students come from low socioeconomic level households and that these percentages are greater than those shown by the University as a whole. This documents the social transformations that can occur when universities work regionally level.

Likewise, the data obtained on the education levels of the household heads is evidence that the university is reaching into low education level households. The NRC students profile has changed from the “traditional” university student prototype, catalogued according to Rama (1992) as “heirs” of a favorable socio-cultural capital.

Undoubtedly, the social-familiar environment has influenced students’ future projections, though it was in no manner determining. In Gladys’s case we can see that she manages to overcome her immediate surroundings and achieves a different reality than the experienced by her family ancestors.

The decision of staying in the education system is not completely an individual decision, but the result of the youngster’s close, surrounding environment –as expressed by Sartre (1989), affected by teachers and professors as key components in this case. The peer group influence (importantly, a selected group) as well as religion as a transcendent component, and at the same time, reading habit forming, are important in success in college life.

For Gladys, personal and familiar aspects included her father who had unparalleled strength and had faced adverse situations, yet always kept the professional training in his horizon. It is apparent that Gladys inherited this characteristic.

This study provides support for the positive impact on the youth from low resource populations that the decentralization policies of the university institutions have had.

The success or failure of these young people in the university trajectory is also strongly influenced both by their family life culture and the resilience of each student. A strong case is the story of Gladys who achieved career success in spite of the vicissitudes of her childhood.

Must take into account that the results of this youngsters at their collage career its influenced by government policies, decentralization programmes, economic support, by their families, and the resilience in front of each one of daily life vicissitudes.

Gladys story is one of many others, who reach the university stage even though they socioeconomic and cultural disadvantages, the institutional challenge is to contain, educate and help them to develop as professionals.

To conclude, we World like to repeat the statement made in previous paragraphs, the investigation of this issue yet is not concluded and the debate is open, what can enable to make others studies that bring more certainty to this topic.

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