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Unfolding the direct and indirect effects of social class of origin on faculty income / Roxana Chiappa ; Paulina Perez Mejias

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Abstract

Studies on faculty income have typically focused on disparities associated with gender and race. Surprisingly, much less attention has been paid to the social class background of university faculty and how it might affect their pathways to the professoriate and their opportunities to access high-paying positions. We attempted to address this gap in the literature by looking at a sample of faculty working at Chilean universities. We used a path analysis approach to estimate not only the direct effects of social class of origin on income but also the indirect mechanisms through which social class of origin influences faculty income. We posed two alternative conceptual perspectives with regard to the effects of social class on income – social reproduction and human capital. We found that faculty who come from the upper social class have access to higher-quality undergraduate education and to more prestigious PhD-granting universities and they report higher earnings as compared with those who come from a low social class. These findings resemble a dynamic of

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cumulative educational advantages that provides grounds to the theory of social reproduction. Although it could be argued that the positive effect of prestige of the PhD-granting university on income is in line with the human capital theory, we claim that such effect cannot be analyzed independently from the direct and indirect relationships that exist between social class of origin and the prestige of the university from which faculty obtained their doctorate degrees. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)