Kamil Łuczaj

The Biographical Experience of Entering the Academic Profession

Popular-Class Lecturers at the Post-Socialist University

LODZ UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Biographical Experience of Entering the Academic Profession

WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

Kamil Łuczaj

The Biographical Experience of Entering the Academic Profession

Popular-Class Lecturers at the Post-Socialist University

LODZ UNIVERSITY PRESS
Lodz 2023

Kamil Łuczaj – University of Łódź, Faculty of Economics and Sociology
Department of the Sociology of Culture, 90-214 Łódź, 41/43 Rewolucji 1905 r. St.

REVIEWERS
Dominik Antonowicz, *Sławomir Czapnik*

INITIATING EDITOR
Katarzyna Włodarczyk

LANGUAGE EDITING
Anna Dolińska

TYPESETTING
AGENT PR

TECHNICAL EDITOR
Leonora Gralka

COVER DESIGN
Monika Rawska
Cover Image: Patrycja Longawa

This work was supported by the National Science Centre, Poland
[grant number UMO-2019/35/D/HS6/00169]

© Copyright by Kamil Łuczaj, Łódź 2023
© Copyright for this edition by University of Łódź, Łódź 2023

Published by Łódź University Press
First edition. W.11104.23.0.M

https://doi.org/10.18778/8331-361-0

Publisher's sheets 10.0; printing sheets 9.25

ISBN 978-83-8331-361-0
e-ISBN 978-83-8331-362-7

Łódź University Press
90-237 Łódź, 34A Jana Matejki St.
www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
phone 42 635 55 77

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the team members of the research team, Olga Kurek-Ochmańska, Edyta Tobiasiewicz, and Sylwia Mikrut, who – being at various stages of their academic career – had a significant impact on the ideas included in this book. I am also grateful to Monika Struck-Peregończyk and Anna Dolińska, who worked closely with us during the entire project and offered insightful comments during our seminars. In order to give due credit to their contribution, I occasionally switch from "I" to "we". I am deeply thankful to those ones who commented on the earlier versions of the drafts of chapters included in this volume, most notably Janusz Mucha, Izabela Wagner and Justyna Kajta. Some interviews were also analyzed during Biographical Seminars held at the University of Lodz. Therefore, I would like to thank Kaja Kaźmierska, Katarzyna Waniek, Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas and Gerhard Riemann for the opportunity to discuss our methodology and some initial interpretations.

I am also grateful to the organizers of conference panels of the International Sociological Association, European Sociological Association and Polish Sociological Association conferences. I was able to refine some ideas during special seminars devoted to our fieldwork which took place at the SWPS University and the Institute of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, where key parts of the project were discussed. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to both reviewers of this book for their valuable comments and suggestions. The project could not have been completed without the financial support of the National Science Centre, Poland (grant number: UMO-2019/35/D/HS6/00169).

Introduction

UPWARD MOBILITY, SEMI-PERIPHERIES, AND THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION

The Aim of the Book

This book is devoted to upwardly mobile university lecturers or people who "escaped the collective fate of their class" (Bourdieu 2011: 42) and succeeded in academia, competing with the dominant on their own territory (Jaquet 2014: 162). These achievements were usually, but not always, admired in the new and old social circles, which we noticed during interviews with middle-class friends and life partners of our core interviewees. This symbolic recognition of upward mobility does not correspond, however, with a very limited number of studies devoted to the careers of upwardly mobile academics in the Polish or post-socialist, cultural context. The upward mobility of the academic faculty is under-researched in the peripheries of global knowledge production (Medina 2014; Luczaj 2020a), although there is a significant interest in the social mobility of students (Bahna 2021). For this reason, nearly all theories and the vast majority of empirical studies reviewed in Chapter 1 come from the United States, United Kingdom, or Western Europe.

As seen from the post-colonial perspective, this lack of studies focused on the peripheries poses a threat of erasing the non-metropolitan experiences. The analyses of the lived experiences of upwardly mobile academics in the post-socialist context reveal that mobility is a complex process which often results in biographical work and re-evaluation of life choices. As a result, the cleft academic habitus reveals its ability to change the petrified structures of a highly stratified higher education (henceforth: HE) system and threaten the academic doxa. The non-reproduction under study was facilitated by some historical and structural factors (e.g. the rapid expansion of the HE sector in the 1990s, and socialist egalitarianism discussed in detail in Chapter 1), but at the same time, the declining prestige of the academic profession made some interviewees question whether their career is, indeed, a typical instance of social advancement. In the book, I discuss "social anatomy" (factors facilitating mobility and turning points of the career path), "physiology" (mechanisms associated with social functioning in a new class culture), and "vivisection" of upward mobility in academic settings (behavioral repertoire and cultural practices of class-mobile academics). Anatomy and physiology help us to understand the position of an upwardly mobile

person within the peripheral academic field. The last part of the analysis is the most detailed one, as it focuses on topics that are hardly ever discussed in the context of upward mobility but, for years, have been of interest to the students of class cultures.

Social Class, Globalization, and Superdiversity

Biographical analysis of upward mobility is by no means an easy task. First, because social classes are ephemeral entities – their borders are changing over time and they have a different meaning (and significance) in every culture. In this book, I draw on Bourdieusian understanding of social class (discussed in detail in Chapter 1), stressing that rather than analyzing narrowly understood social classes from a transhistorical perspective, sociology should investigate multidimensional social space in which power struggles take place in a particular place within a particular time. In this space, the key role is played by economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Bourdieusian understanding of social class helps us to avoid problems associated with the model "anti-class" argument stating that since the understandings of social class and class consciousness are constantly changing, therefore these notions have little use. Thus, I agree with Jake Ryan and Chris Sackrey's (1996: 12) claim that "the classes are discernible entities, even if where people fit is not always clear." The broad Bourdieusian concept of popular classes allows us to focus on multiple sources of class-related domination and its results in academia.

Another difficulty was associated with significant changes taking place within global academia and the Polish HE system. Progressing globalization, uniformization of research standards based on the Anglo-Saxon tradition (inextricably linked with the acceptance of English as the new *lingua franca*), and the "tyranny of the research model" (Ryan and Sackrey 1996) contribute to great changes in the role of an academic worldwide. In the peripheral academic systems, it means that it is no longer sufficient to possess the cultural capital legitimized in a local academic field, but a contemporary academic is expected to take part in the transnational power struggles which require specific transnational or cosmopolitan dispositions, unlikely to be formed in working-class families. These issues are further problematized in the course of analysis. Moreover, nowadays, universities in Poland differ in many respects: based on their size, geographical location (big cities and smaller towns), institutional prestige, quality of research and teaching, the social composition of the student body, etc. This institutional diversity, along with discipline divisions, makes different trajectories of mobility possible. The typology of upwardly mobile academics from Poland analyzed in Chapter 2 adds two new sub-types of Bourdieusian "les miraculés": the "normal

miraculous" and "non-miraculous." These categories make it possible to grasp the transformations of the Polish academic field in the last 30 years, after the political changes in the country and the reforms of the HE system. However, what all these very different universities have in common is a relatively unfavorable level of academic salaries, which makes Poland different from the US, the UK, or other countries where becoming an academic almost automatically means becoming a middle-class person. This is yet another aspect of the HE system which is taken into account not only in the more theoretically oriented Chapter 1 but also in subsequent empirical analyses.

The third clear difficulty is the inability to disentangle the impact of class, age cohort and gender on the life trajectories of upwardly mobile academics under postmodern super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). Nowadays, a dynamic interplay of many variables impacts the lives of citizens of most European countries, which results in a social diversity never seen before. Poland, although certainly less super-diverse than the UK, experiences a vast transformation of consumption patterns which go hand in hand with new transnational networks. In such a society, it is next to impossible to clearly delineate where the impact of a generation or gender ends, and the impact of a social class starts. As Bourdieu famously stated years ago, "sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions" (Bourdieu 1984: 107). For instance, one of the famous findings of the upward-mobility literature discussed in Chapter 3 is that in the course of mobility, popular class academics lose the bond with their families because they become so different from their relatives. While it is certainly true also in Poland, it is not easy to judge to what extent social class accounts for these clear lifestyle differences (analyzed in detail in Chapter 4) because it is self-explanatory that everyone is different compared to his or her parent. This difficulty is addressed in two ways. First, the cross-analysis of the unstructured interviews (*récits croisés)* (Bertaux 2010) paired with semi-structured interviews with friends/colleagues and family members help to capture various aspects of mobility. Based on this material, it is possible to distinguish the situation where the role of class seems to be crucial (e.g. defining life success or acquiring transnational capital) and where class just amplifies the effect of other social factors (e.g. in the case of religious transformations). Second, whenever it is possible, I reach out to family interviews to employ what I refer to as the "sibling argument," which illustrates that even within the same generation, the lifestyle of popular class inheritors and upwardly mobile *miraculous survivors* are clearly distinct.

Structure of the Book

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the Bourdieusian and post-Bourdieusian theory of social reproduction and contemporary literature on non-reproduction or upward mobility through academia. For the reasons stated in this introduction, the review embraces mainly European and North American literature. Furthermore, Chapter 1 explains why, due to the mixture of historical reasons and symbolic violence, the category of social class is neither a popular discursive category nor the emic category gladly used by the interviewees. I discuss how academic careers in the Eastern European periphery differ from careers in the global center and how these differences impact upward mobility. Finally, I outline the study design: core biographical interviews, interviews with families, interviews with friends/colleagues and repeated interviews with core participants, totaling 76 interviews of different kinds and scopes.

Chapter 2 analyzes the spontaneous life story narratives and additional data from individual in-depth interviews to determine the most salient factors facilitating mobility in post-socialist academia. Building on qualitative biographical material, I discuss what kinds of metamorphoses were necessary to overcome the vicious circle of social reproduction.

Chapter 3 outlines the mechanisms associated with the transition from the culture of origin (working-class or rural) to the middle-class culture of the academic world. This part of the analysis reveals social suffering but also the bright sides of upward mobility. Building on the theories of class neurosis (*la névrose de classe*), class straddling, rankism, and the impostor syndrome, I argue that the "rags to riches" myth is, well, a myth, even in the post-socialist peripheral HE system. The findings of this chapter suggest that even in the system where access to the academic profession is largely facilitated as a result of the devaluation of university diplomas, those whose biographies contradict the golden rule of reproduction ("rags to rags, riches to riches"), have a preponderant sense of being out-of-place. It can manifest itself in the form of deep uncertainty or "survivor's guilt".

Chapter 4 seeks patterns in cultural practices associated with upward mobility. It is the longest part of the analysis, as it tackles the most salient question of the project by posing the question about the visible cultural markers of social mobility. This chapter constitutes an attempt to look at class-mobile academics not only in structural terms (prestige, position, income) but also to examine how mobility has shifted their lifestyles.

Chapter 1

THE MIRACULOUS AND THE INHERITORS IN 21ST CENTURY POLAND. ON THE THEORIES OF UPWARD MOBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION BEYOND THE GLOBAL CENTERS

In December 2022, a British branch of the consulting firm KPMG published a report stating that social class is the biggest barrier to career progression, and its effects are stronger than the impact of gender identity or ethnic minority background (KPMG 2022). This report sheds new light on an issue that has been ignored for decades in business analyses. For decades, "social class" has had bad connotations, which often resulted in treating it as an artifact, or a social variable, which lost the remnants of its historical significance under turbocapitalism (Luttwak 1999).

The academic literature, usually way more profound than business analyses, unfortunately often suffers from the same illusions. The KPMG report and the sociological research conducted for the sake of this book share a common aim of bringing social class back to the discussion on human careers, despite clear differences between the two endeavors. First, it should be stressed that KMPG was interested in professional careers in the business world, while this book refers to a very specific professional path – academic careers in the economy of symbolic goods (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Secondly, what turned out to be true in the UK is not necessarily the case in a post-socialist country such as Poland. Thirdly, unlike the KMPG report, this study relies on the biographical method. Nevertheless, anticipating things a little, the analysis conducted on a different social world, in a different country, and with a very different set of methodological techniques leads us to the same main finding: in the third decade of the 21st century, social class still matters. What is more, the identified class disadvantages call for institutional solutions, which KPMG started to implement, and which are still very much needed in academia.

This chapter discusses the Bourdieusian and post-Bourdieusian theories of social reproduction and upward mobility within academia. I start by presenting state-of-the-art research on "non-reproduction" (Jaquet 2014) – upward mobility in Western Europe and North America. Subsequently, I argue that these theories are not fully adequate in a post-socialist academic field shaped by different social forces and offering different stakes (*enjeux*). Next, I use the tools of the sociology of knowledge to discuss the transition from a high interest in the topic of social class in communist Poland to its decline after the year 1989. I explain

why nowadays the category of social class is neither a popular discursive category in Poland and other post-communist countries nor a notion used by the upwardly mobile individuals interviewed for the purpose of this book. Finally, I present the empirical material utilized in Chapters 2–4 and explain the core methodological assumptions.

Social Class as an Essentially Contested Concept

In his essay from 1955, Walter Gallie argued that our language contains numerous concepts "the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (Gaullie 1955: 169). Social class is certainly an "essentially contested concept." The proponents of the new working-class studies, on which this book builds, suggest that in the contemporary world "class is a homograph, a word that has multiple, shifting, contested meanings" (Russo and Linkon 2005: 11).

The long tradition of social stratification research – dating back to Pitirim Sorokin's (1927) seminal work – usually understood social class in Marxian terms of labor relations tied to the ownership of property and the means of production. Eric Olin Wright (2000: 25) undertook probably the most prominent attempt to adjust rigid old concepts to the complexity in the class structure in the 20th century capitalism, e.g. by introducing the category of "contradictory class location" in which "a person's job class and their property class become partially uncoupled." This kind of materialist class analysis denied the fact that skills and expertise are a dimension of a class location while recognizing that they constitute the "cultural correlates of class" (Wright 2000: 19). Similarly, Polish stratification research, with its long tradition and top-level systematic research on many aspects of class location (see, e.g. Slomczynski 1989; Domański 2015; Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2015), usually relied on the traditional definition of social position measured by the father's occupational status and education.

At the same time, as Eric Olin Wright has argued, "most research on social mobility has been at least loosely linked to a Weberian framework of class analysis," which "revolves around the problem of common life chances of people within market exchanges" (Wright 2000: 85). This fact from the history of sociology has one important methodological implication as "sociologists working in this tradition typically treat locations within class structures as soft categories requiring only loose definitions and relatively casual theoretical defense" (Wright 2000: 80). Although this book subscribes into "cultural class analysis" (Eijk 2012, see: Devine and Savage 2005), paying attention to both economic and cultural processes co-constituting a social class (Bourdieu and Champagne 1992), I would like to explicate how this notion is understood in subsequent chapters.

The Relational Understanding of Social Class

For Bourdieu, social class, a term used interchangeably with social background, was "a multifaceted relational phenomenon which is not located merely within the relations of production but within the conceptual space of social relations in general" (Manderscheid 2009: 10). Under this framework "the dispositions acquired in the position occupied involve an adjustment to this position" (Bourdieu 1987: 5). Bourdieu's understanding of social class (Bourdieu 1984) goes well beyond the Marxist theory, which understood social classes as large categories of people defined by their place in relation to the means of production at a particular historical moment. In Bourdieu's thought, class is something more multidimensional. First, for Bourdieu, social classes are dynamic constellations, and the key to understanding them is their relational nature: it is impossible to understand a social class in isolation but only as part of the entire social space made by the global volume of capital, the composition of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) and the social trajectory, or changes over time (Bourdieu 1984). Secondly, it is worth stressing that an individual's social location is closely related to economic resources but equally so to aesthetic tastes as well as social networks one is part of. This theory sheds light on the process of distinguishing class through social behavior (see: Kraus, Piff and Keltner 2011), including consumption (Eglitis 2011: 438–439). Social class is, thus, neither a sum of someone's possessions, a set of cultural practices, or a typical form of sociability, but the amalgam of all of these interrelated factors. Furthermore, "social classes are produced through symbolic acts in which they are named and differentiated from others" (Musílek and Katrňák 2015: 395). Therefore, Bourdieusian understanding of social class makes it very difficult to separate its impact from the impact of other social factors, such as gender, ethnicity, or age. As Bourdieu (1984: 107) famously stated, gender or age properties are inseparable from class properties, as they all co-constitute the social space. This profound observation sensitizes us to the fact that the main aim of this book, i.e. the discussion of the role of social class in the course of an academic career, is both salient and difficult to accomplish. In Chapters 2–4, based on empirical material, I stress how the core social variables intersect with each other. As we shall see, in many cases, it will be impossible to simply state that class seems to provide the such-and-such effect. Instead, I demonstrate how class, together with age, place of birth, or gender manifested themselves in selected, biographically important social circumstances. To clearly mark the intellectual roots of this endeavor, I decided to use the Bourdieusian category of the popular class instead of a more common "working class". Even if I use this label to refer to what other authors had to say about upward mobility, in this book, social classes are understood in the post-Bourdieusian sense.

In my opinion, the Bourdieusian perspective asserting that social class is co-constituted by many social factors, even if struggling with formulating a precise definition of a social class (or uninterested in such formulation, due to the idea of "open concepts"[1]), provides a fertile ground for closing an important research gap. As Katharine Manderscheid (2009: 9) pointed out, modern social class analysis, both Marxian and Weberian, "has been criticized for being preoccupied with the economic sphere, ignoring other relevant resources of power like knowledge or social networks and blanking gender, ethnicity, and age as sources of inequality, criss-crossing other societal dimensions." Only a few pioneering studies suggested, for instance, that members of ethnic minorities "may be middle-class in terms of wealth, education, occupational status, tastes, and lifestyles, yet they are neither recognized as fully middle-class by whites nor consider themselves middle-class" as this category, in some societies, is conflated with whiteness (Schwarz 2016: 14). Thus, authors such as Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey (1996: 112), the first sociologists interested in the lived experiences of social mobility among academics, argue that "class is also a cultural network of shared values and meanings and interactions". This view is consistent with Bourdieu's claim that "agents in the same class are as similar as possible in the greatest possible number of respects" (Bourdieu 1987: 5). Class cultures, thus, "give a particular sense of kinship or sense of belonging to its members" (Ryan and Sackrey 1996: 107), and are different from one another (Metzgar 2021). In other words, when viewed from the class culture perspective, although upwardly mobile academics enter the middle-class world, their new position does not come as a "ready-made class identity" (Ryan and Sackrey 1996; Metzgar 2021) but is inseparable from the life history of the people who lived part of their lives in one social class and the rest in another. This book is, thus, a biographical genealogy of the cleft habitus in academia.

Social Class in Liquid Modernity

The evolution of social classes has also been theorized in the studies of postmodernity, late modernity, or liquid modernity. For instance, in the works of Zygmunt Bauman, whose concept of liquid modernity has gained enormous resonance, the category of social class occupies a prominent place. Although in his early works, such as *the Career* (pol. *Kariera*), published exclusively in Polish, the departure point was the Marxian understanding of social

[1] Bourdieu claimed that "concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be put to work empirically in a systematic fashion" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96).

stratification, his late works demonstrate how liquid modernity changes the meaning of classes, and how old divisions are displaced by new ones (Bauman 2011). Bauman's work documents and analyzes in depth the new inequalities emerging globally and consequently, the concepts of class need to follow these changes. Otherwise "our understanding of changes in social and political structure" would have been "hindered by the freezing of concepts of class in the ice-age of industrial society" – as the editor of his *Memories of Class* put it in a promotional blurb (Bauman 1982/2009). Bauman points out that class positions more and more often cannot be adequately captured within the nation-state framework since the point of reference is the various kinds of transnational spaces in which modern *strollers*, *vagabonds*, *tourists*, and *players* reside (Bauman 1996). Bauman's analysis, however, emphatically demonstrates that transformations are also taking place within nation-states themselves, rendering the Marxian vision of social structure insufficiently nuanced to reflect the changing and newly emerging divisions within societies.

Richard Sennett was probably the one who explored these changes in the most detailed way, based on the American example. His works demonstrate the historicity of the concept of social class, which was perhaps most clearly made evident in *The Corrosion of Character* (Sennett 1998), a book devoted to the flexibilization of labor in the last decades of the 20th century. Sennett analyzes how generational change, and various social changes, influenced the class cultures. Although under modern capitalism social class still shapes the lives of people all over the world, the boundaries of particular social classes seem to be shifted, and there are new manifestations of class. For example, in late modernity, the worker solidarity known from industrial capitalism when large factories employed significant numbers of workers began to blur. Furthermore, in Sennett's early analyses of the mid-twentieth century America (see: Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993), class and ethnicity were inseparable due to the mass migration to the US. Back then, the working class consisted largely of the newly arrived Irish, Italians, or Poles. In more recent books (see, e.g. Sennett 1998; Sennett 2003; Sennett 2006), although intersectional analysis continues to yield cognitively interesting results, the relationship between class and ethnicity is already different, and ethnic divisions are less pronounced (which is not to say that the effect of class has suddenly evaporated).

In his seminal book *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (co-written with Jonathan Cobb), devoted to Boston's working class, Sennett discusses, inter alia, the key topic of my book – upward mobility. Exploring it further in his later works, he also utilizes knowledge stemming from his special insider/outsider status – a result of the ambiguous social position he occupied as a child, as the descendant of a family with a powerful stock of cultural capital, but which experienced a very pronounced declassing while living in the Cabrini social housing project in

Chicago (Sennett 2003). On the basis of numerous interviews in working-class communities conducted in the 1960s, Sennett and Cobb (1972/1993) came to a conclusion that can be summarized as follows: the stake in the modern class struggle, in addition to material rewards, is a competition for social respect. The emotional cost of belonging to the working class is often humiliation, as best seen in the case of Kartides, who, working as a janitor, received strict instructions to "use the back door and never let his children play on the empty lawn surrounding the building" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 47), or the pipe fitter earning twice the salary of his neighbor – a school teacher – but still addressing him by "Mister" (and being called by his first name). Sennett, thus, suggests that the emotional cost of upward mobility is often a sense of loss of ties to the old world, which can be felt as a betrayal – by individuals or their families. Sennett and Cobb's book suggested that when a child succeeds, it is the parents who suffer above all, even when they had previously done everything to make the mobility, or "turn outward," as Sennett puts it, possible. For this reason, he states that "what most complicates the shaping of character—if a person does turn outward, changing his or her ideas and sentiments through the influence of new people or events—is return to the world he or she has left behind" (Sennett 2003: 242).

Sennett argues that mutual social respect and individual self-respect – which he clearly distinguishes – can only occur under conditions of autonomy. The latter is fundamental since in modern culture autonomy is an indicator of the personal value of a worker and, therefore indirectly, the value of a person as a human being. Sennett argues in several books that popular surveys of occupational prestige are nothing else but a measure of the autonomy and self-direction associated with particular professions. This is why an electrician – working by himself with a relatively large margin of autonomy – can be assessed as having a more prestigious job as compared to a manager, who is usually an order-taker and can do a good job only when other people decide to buy from him (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993, cf. Sennett 2006). Furthermore, individuals perceived as gifted (Sennett 2006) are seen as autonomous, following the modern model of the genius artist, a point Sennett makes abundantly clear by drawing on another autobiographical experience – a music career interrupted by injury. The lack of autonomy, meanwhile, results in the lack of social recognition. It makes those in jobs requiring subordination to others outsiders – in a material and symbolic sense. Their work, in turn, becomes invisible in new capitalism divested of social solidarity and the imperative to help the more vulnerable members of society (Sennett 2006).

Those deprived of respect, even when they see the meaning of their work and are satisfied with its results (like the cleaners who takes pride in their work, especially on Mondays when they manage to bring the streets back to normal after the weekend), experience a lack of self-confidence and an internal split (Sennett 2003). As a consequence, some working-class people think of themselves as an

entity composed of the "real self" and the "institution's individual." Such "fragmentation and divisions in the self are the arrangements consciousness makes in response to an environment where respect is not forthcoming as a matter of course" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 191–210). Sennett's theory, however, is far from a naïve approach that treats class as a purely cultural construct. This can be seen when he argues that we acquire respect not only through the status and prestige of an occupation but also through the objects we can buy, and thus, to use Bourdieu's language through objectified cultural capital. As with Bourdieu and other authors dealing with social inequalities, the emancipatory potential of this theory is evident. Presumably addressing other members of the middle class (and somewhat patronizing the working class) in the conclusion of one of his books, Sennett states that the main purpose of the deliberations carried out was to promote equality, which amounts to accepting what we cannot understand in other people (Sennett 2003). This is why we should not be surprised that "doctors talk differently than plumbers, and by extension, the children of plumbers who become doctors talk differently" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 240). While Sennett diagnoses the hidden injuries of working-class individuals and masterfully analyzes their behavioral and emotional consequences, he has little interest in the question of why and how the social system reproduces itself, apart from the theory of action drafted above. His answer would be that reproduction is possible because "the way in which people try to keep free of the emotional grip of the social structure, unintentionally, systematically, in aggregate keeps the class order going" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 258). Although this is an interesting idea, more systemic factors were discovered on the other side of the ocean at roughly the same time.

Social Reproduction, the Miraculous, and Non-Reproduction

The theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; 1979) predicts that academic success is largely dependent on the social origins of a student because the academic profession, in most countries, is close to the top of the professional prestige hierarchy. The members of dominant classes, who have inherited economic and cultural capital, usually have connections (social capital) that make their careers easier and allow them to make the most of the remaining forms of capital (the ability Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital). On the other end of the spectrum, we can meet members of popular classes deprived of these capitals. These inequalities can be traced at the level of student admissions and dropout rates but also in academic careers (Siemieńska 2006; Arum, Gamoran, Shavit 2007; Arner 2021; Morgan et al. 2021). The social closure of the most prestigious higher education institutions has been identified in many countries (Bourdieu

2003; Swartz 2008). The theory of Pierre Bourdieu, arguably, provides the most comprehensive tools to understand the impenetrability of the academic field by newcomers with no or inadequate cultural capital.

And yet, popular class background is not an insurmountable barrier to an academic career. The participants of the study discussed in this book succeeded in breaking the usual order of things: having a modest background, they made it to the prestigious profession, i.e. "escaped from becoming creatures of circumstances" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 25), or "escaped the collective fate of their class" (Bourdieu 2011: 42). Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1997; 2003; 2008) refers to such people as the miraculous (*les miraculés*) or oblates (*oblats*). Bourdieu's *oeuvre* does not, however, offer any convincing explanation of how one can become an oblate in the field where symbolic violence is omnipresent. Bourdieu introduced the concept of "the scientific habitus," or

> a rule *made man*, an embodied rule or, better, a scientific modus operandi that functions in a practical state according to the norms of science without having these norms as its explicit principle: it is this sort of scientific *feel for the game* (*sens du jeu*) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 223–224).

Based on his works, we can barely understand how popular classes can acquire this kind of habitus (Jaquet 2014: 4). One of the possible explanations is, as the term "the miraculous" suggests, that it is impossible to describe the circumstances enabling upward mobility. Such a defeatist attitude, however, seems unacceptable to sociologists, who are rather reluctant to accept randomness as an independent factor used in the social analysis (Becker 1998).

On the theoretical level, Chantal Jaquet (2014: 15) was probably the first to develop the theory of "non-reproduction." She attempted to philosophically understand social mobility based on many sources, including literature. Jaquet offers an analysis of family and school environments to emphasize what can be referred to as a liminal status of "transclasses," social agents with "many faces" (Jaquet 2014: 106). She discusses various difficulties associated with acculturation to the new environment with a special focus on the emotional aspect of this process, rarely problematized in the classical stratification literature. The most important part of this theory is, however, the analysis of lived experiences of people *changing classes*, not mere social positions (Jaquet 2014: 132).

This general reflection on the non-reproduction (being a subtitle of Jaquet's book) is a good starting point for more detailed empirical investigations. In the sociology of higher education, the problem of social mobility through an academic career is relatively under-researched, both from the international, comparative perspective but also on the level of each individual HE system (Archer, Hutchings, and Ross 2003; Xu 2020). More typically, the problems of upwardly

mobile academics are discussed by the proponents of the *new working-class studies* (Hurst 2010; Hurst and Warnock 2015; Binns 2019; Crew 2020), often based on (auto)ethnographic research techniques (Walley 2013). This book bridges the gap between higher education studies and working-class studies by using empirical material from a narrative study (unstructured biographical interviews and individual in-depth interviews) to explain the process of non-reproduction associated with entering the academic profession.

The Rejection of Class at the Level of Public Discourse

According to Bourdieu's theory, a proper social analysis should be conducted within a specific field. The analyses presented in this book are thus limited to the Polish academic field, a system that differs from the French system, which Bourdieu and his colleagues analyzed, but also from many contemporary Western European systems (Kwiek 2018). Similarly to the "epistemological intentions" of *Homo Academicus,* the theoretical implications of this book go well beyond a single national field by either offering "a constructed set of transformational rules enabling systematic transfers to be made from one historical tradition to another, or at least, more modestly, to suggest starting points for the transposition of the analyses" concerning broader problems (Bourdieu 2003: XVI). To make it possible, it seems indispensable to discuss some historical features of Polish society in general and the Polish HE system in particular. Unfortunately, the sparse Polish empirical studies, which at least partially discuss the issue of upward mobility *through academia*, are limited to few papers discussing quantitative data (e.g., Kwiek 2015a), sub-regional case studies (e.g., Nawrocki 2001), or analyses of socialist reality (e.g. Andrejuk 2016). Few papers offer in-depth insights into the narrow aspect of social mobility, e.g., family relations (Ferenc 2012; Dębska 2020), yet higher education is not their main focus. There are also a few books discussing upward mobility from a broader biographical perspective but not necessarily through academia (Grochalska 2011; Rek-Woźniak 2012). None of these publications subscribe directly to either working-class studies, post-dependence studies, or sociology of higher education as this book does.[2] Most importantly, however, no author has explicitly raised the question of how mobility is possible in a post-socialist HE system, what emotional mechanisms it involves, and how mobility translates into cultural practices of upwardly mobile individuals.

---

[2] The exception is an unpublished MA thesis by Michał Łuczewski (2003). I refer to these findings courtesy of the Author, who made the manuscript available to me.

Translating Western working-class studies into the post-socialist context poses some particular challenges because of fundamental differences between Poland and the countries where theories of class experience were coined.[3] History makes Poland and other post-socialist countries unique. First, it is important that many academic elites from these countries left for Western Europe and North America after the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the anti-Semitic purges of 1968. Secondly, Polish society has peasant roots, and post-war affirmative action (Zysiak 2019a) aimed – with varying effects – at helping the children of workers and peasants gain access to higher education (see: Zysiak 2019b). The democratic transition did not change the fact that if university professors count as middle-class, this is a specific fraction of the middle class – the intelligentsia. In contrast to American professors falling into professional–managerial class, Polish processors do not have high salaries, and their main asset is cultural capital (Zarycki 2009). The transition to the market economy commenced in 1989 and did not change this state of affairs (Kwiek 2015b). Even if it enabled some entrepreneurs to get rich very quickly, it simultaneously resulted in severe poverty for many victims of privatization and de-industrialization, which has been captured by the studies on stratification (Domański, 2015; Eurofound, 2017; Tomescu-Dubrow et al. 2018).

Ironically, while in the socialist states, the class structure was relatively flat, class itself was an important discursive category (Eglitis 2011; Leśniewicz 2022). At that time, many studies were focused on the upward mobility of university students. Although not devoid of conceptual controversies associated with framing the studies in an orthodox Marxist way, e.g. by equating the "rural youth" category to the "peasant youth" (see: Wasielewski 2013), these studies were genuinely interested in a class structure of the student body. Even if some studies and publications were designed with a clear political intent to mechanically depreciate the elitist bourgeois model of the university, and introduce an open socialist university (see: Kajówna 1958 cited in Wasielewski 2013), these – now historic – analyses provide valuable insights into the class structure of the university (see, e.g. Łoś 1972; Świecki 1975; Osiński 1977; Jarosz 1986). Unfortunately, the majority of findings were limited to the early phase of an academic career, i.e. becoming a university student. The knowledge of the further career stages of university professors with a working-class background was very limited also in socialist Poland. Even worse so, although in the post-socialist states inequalities rose in the

[3] The first version of this analysis appeared in 2022 in the "Working-Class Perspectives" blog in the form of a post entitled "Working-class Academics in Poland: Translating working-class studies into the post-communist context", available: https://workingclassstudies.wordpress.com/2022/08/22/working-class-academics-in-poland-translating-working-class-studies-into-the-post-communist-context/.

1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century, class disappeared from public discourse at all. The downplaying of its role coexisted with empirical evidence of a "class ceiling" in many market sectors, including higher education and academic careers (Siemieńska 2006; Zawistowska 2009; Kwiek 2015a). While research taking into account the class background of students continued (see, e.g., Gorlach 2005; Wasielewski 2013), the research devoted to the class of the faculty was almost non-existent. This creates a paradox in East European societies, where "the rejection of the notion of the class goes hand in hand with the symbolic division of society into class-like groups based on their economic position" (Musílek and Katrňák 2015: 388). It seems that sociohistorical changes and symbolic violence played an equally important role in framing this class-blind imaginary.

As seen from a historical perspective, the rejection of class differences at the level of public discourse can be attributed to historical changes and general anti-communist sentiments. When the socialist system, ideologically consecrating the working class and peasants, collapsed, social class was deemed obsolete. For instance, the largely ridiculed affirmative action which took the form of "bonus points for social origin," made people reluctant to use this category. This explanation seems to be valid also in other post-socialist countries (Balockaite 2009; Ost 2009; Musílek and Katrňák 2015). Some papers suggest that the near disappearance of class can be explained by a cooptation of the symbols of the communist ideology into the consumer culture (Eglitis 2011: 432), which, in turn, led to the "rejection of a vocabulary and critical theoretical perspective." History, as a reason for downplaying social class, was also directly indicated by the upwardly mobile interviewees. For instance, Maria, a daughter of a car mechanic and a nurse, who will appear in the next chapters, made it clear that she was initially reluctant to frame issues in terms of social class due to the legacy of the socialist system. She was one of many people who, in time of rapid neoliberal reforms, started to share a belief that social class was an irrelevant factor "*invented* during the communist period and is no longer applicable" (Wojnicka, 2020: 6). Class became an "invisible" factor in interview-based research, because Poles ceased to self-identify in class terms (Rek-Woźniak 2012: 232). By doing so, although they remained a class "in itself" (or, more precisely, a "class as against capital"), not that often had they had class consciousness, i.e. constituted a class "for itself" (Marx 1847/1963, see: Bendix and Lipset 1966). In a mono-ethnic Polish society with a conservative political orientation (Jasiecki 2018), discourses tended to treat the society as a whole – it was dominated by the belief that we *all* have to catch up with the West. Young capitalism successfully convinced the public that the "lazy" poor were to blame for their plight (Rae 2016) and that economic marginality should be associated with criminality or deviance rather than with structural problems (Eglitis 2011: 432, see: Stenning 2005). Among the interviewees, critical consciousness (pt. *conscientização*) (Freire 1970) came at various stages of their academic career and in various forms and

degrees, but almost no one denied that social class, or social background, shaped their life and work (see: Chapter 3).

The second possible explanation for the aversion to the notion of social class is built on symbolic violence. As Bourdieu (1987: 16) noted, "the dominant strive to impose their own vision and to develop representations which offer a *theodicy of their privilege*." Thus, the members of the middle and upper classes are especially reluctant to acknowledge that it was the social class that facilitated their careers. Instead of acknowledging one's own privilege, it is more convenient to claim that in the world of meritocracy, class divisions no longer exist. This attitude can be interpreted as an instance of an "epistemological fear" (Scheu 2011) stemming from the inability to understand the other, and a dislike, at least subconscious, of the idea that one day some social distinction may disappear. It is precisely what Karel Musílek and Tomáš Katrňá (2015: 398) identified as an important part of media discourse in the Czech press. Depicting politics as a clash of the more and less powerful was compared to letting the "genie out of the bottle" that might have helped "the dark forces to rise many times before." As a result, popular classes are either ignored or depicted in post-socialist media as backward, mysterious, ridiculous, dangerous, funny, childish, immoral, strange, different, or exotic (Balockaite 2009, see: Gąsior-Niemiec, Glasze, and Pütz 2009). Moreover, the category of social class is almost absent from non-academic research: public statistics and market research as contrasted with the UK, where the Labour Force Survey utilizes the concept of social class (Crew 2020), and the US, where major polling institutions specifically ask about one's class location (King 2019).

The Dominated among the Dominated. Higher Education in Poland and the Issue of Class

In Poland, social class had not returned to public debates until very recently when studies focused on a "people's history" started to attract more interest (see, e.g. Zysiak 2016; Leszczyński 2020) but social research on the experiences of working-class academics remains to be uncharted territory. The important exceptions are – as I indicated above – the studies devoted to the lower-class youth and students (see e.g., Kwieciński 1995). Similarly, programs supporting working-class or first-generation academics simply do not exist in Poland, unlike in the UK or the US (King and McPherson 2021). At the same time, global academic dialogues prove that, for all the varied forms that inequality and exclusion take worldwide, social class is one of the most significant determinants of an academic career (Naudet 2018; Arner 2021; Durst and Beréményi 2021; Metzgar 2021). If we want to understand class as a real disadvantaging factor, not just an ideological and obsolete concept, we need to expand our studies on the experiences

of working-class academics worldwide – to discuss various institutional, historical, and cultural contexts.

Polish HE system underwent rapid changes in recent decades (Kwiek 2015b). Since the youngest interviewees were in their 30s and the oldest in their 60s, they started their academic careers in democratic Poland, although some entered it just after the political change of 1989. The proper context of the biographies under study is, thus, the democratic transition, neo-liberalization, and internationalization of Polish universities, which also has profound consequences for the experience of upward mobility.

On the one hand, the Polish education system is more egalitarian than many Western systems (including the USA, UK, or France). Poland has few super-expensive private schools, and many public schools offer good quality education. The best Polish universities are public, most of their academic programs are free, and private universities offer low fees. Moreover, even the most selective universities, such as the University of Warsaw or AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, offer programs with extremely high acceptance rates, so there is no Polish equivalent of École Normale Supérieure or Oxford University. Access to the academic profession through less prestigious institutions was possible due to the expansion of the Polish higher education sector in the 1990s, which resulted in hundreds of new universities (mainly private) and numerous new programs (Kwiek 2015b). Also, rather unattractive salaries for the faculty make upward mobility easier to achieve because, at least in certain academic fields (such as IT, medicine, or engineering), many talented students choose a non-academic career path, making space for other contenders. These conditions make upward mobility through education less strenuous in Poland than in the UK, the US, or France. But it is also far from straightforward or easy: first-generation and working-class academics still have to face cultural barriers associated with impostorism, class neurosis, working-class stigma, or breakaway guilt (Walkerdine 1994; Reay 2005; Lee 2017; Gaulejac 2016; Bothello and Roulet 2019). Furthermore, as a result of the devaluation of university credentials (Ryan and Sackrey 1996; Bourdieu 2003), upward mobility lost part of its original appeal from the time when universities were still universally respected institutions and academic career was desired by many. Now, as we shall see based on the empirical analysis, this prestige is called into question by the "miraculous" academics. This ambiguous impact of the democratization of the HE system can be, therefore, dubbed the double-edged sword of egalitarianism.

As seen from a global perspective, the Polish case is specific because it illustrates how social class is experienced in a peripheral academic system. In many post-socialist countries, academics encounter unfavorable working conditions because they lack global recognition and international collaboration, have limited career opportunities within their own HE system, have to face old, post-socialist organizational culture (e.g. high power distances), and struggle with everyday work

at underfinanced universities (Luczaj 2020a). Moreover, the internationalization efforts also seem to be closely related to the careers of working-class academics because they have incorporated international standards in the assessment of academic performance (Kwiek 2015b). In many post-socialist HE systems, unlike in the US, UK, or France, it is not the *national* publication record that counts most but the ability to convince the *international* audience that someone's research is significant. Nowadays, successful academics need to use the "transnational capital" or experiences, knowledge, and skills acquired during their stays abroad (Li, Yang, and Wu 2018) and in their research work. This form of capital is, however, often inaccessible to first-generation or popular-class students, and as such, constitutes another impediment to their careers in academia, making it more difficult to feel as an intellectual (Zarycki and Warczok 2020: 56). As we shall see in the biographies of upwardly mobile individuals, usually, the first international trips and stays occurred at the stage of career building, not in high school, or during university studies. On the subjective plan, this resulted in a sense of deficit (in comparison with their middle-class peers), and in the objective plan, it made them less competitive in international publishing and obtaining international grants. Internationalization, thus, makes popular class academics in Poland *the dominated* (due to their class location) *among the dominated* (due to the region they work).

Methods and Data

The study design was threefold (see: Diagram 1). The core part was based on Tom Wengraf's biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM) (Wengraf 2001). Each of the 26 biographical, unstructured interviews began with a single question aimed at inducing a spontaneous narrative (SQUIN): 'Please tell me in detail the story of your life that made you enter the academic career path.' The second part of each interview was based on deliberately vague questions related to this narrative. Every interview was transcribed verbatim (Schramm 2005) and interpreted during research seminars. A typical panel was comprised of six members with academic experience varying from established researchers to doctoral students and undergraduate students of different genders and class backgrounds, which guaranteed a variety of interpretative perspectives being involved. For the longer and more complex narratives, two seminars have been organized in order to separately analyze two tracks of the narration: the "lived-life-living track" (i.e. the objective life events contained in the narrative) and the more subjective recounting, the "told-story-telling track" (i.e. the storytelling track of the narrative). Shorter and less complex narratives were analyzed during a more typical one-day interpretative seminar (the panelists discussed their interpretations of the entire interview transcript).

The second phase was based on individual in-depth interviews with (1) family members and (2) co-workers of the interviewees. In the first case, the interviewee was typically a parent or a sibling (representing the social origin), and in the other – a person from the new social circle (representing the social destination). These interviews were conducted with academic colleagues of our core interviewees, who often happened to be their friends. The interviews were coded by two independent coders in Atlas.ti suite and thematically analyzed. In this case, the reliability of interpretations was based on the calculated inter-coder agreement measure (the Holsti index).

The third phase was based on repeated interviews (Hermanowicz 2009, Roos H. 2022). The original participants were invited to take part in a follow-up interview. The first part of the interview was designed to elucidate unclear parts of the narrations (pinpointed during the seminars in the first phase) and track, longitudinally, the career changes over the course of 12 to 24 months. The interview protocol also contained questions related to social mobility, class location, and various mechanism identified in the literature review. The second and third phase interviews provided contextual information used in the analysis of the core cases.

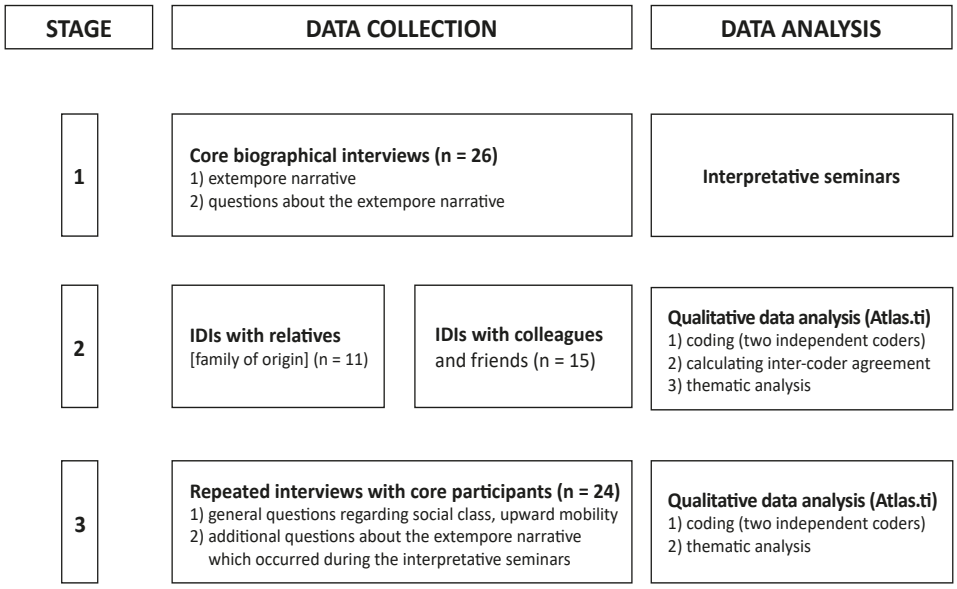

Diagram 1. Research Design

The qualitative methodological approach helped the team to analyze the career trajectories of upwardly mobile academics in detail with special attention put on their self-understanding of the phenomena in question and the tacit, non-narrative aspects of the interview: the tone of voice or emotional reactions.

The interviewees were Doctors (Ph.D.) who experienced upward social mobility as they were born into popular class or peasant families, and at the moment of the interview were working as university researchers or lecturers, although not necessarily on a full-time contract basis. Table 1 presents the key characteristics of the interviewees. Two points related to the composition of this sample need further discussion. First, it should be noted that class boundaries are not always easily discernible, but are more commonly fuzzy as a cloud or a forest (Bourdieu 1987: 13). Jake Ryan and Chris Sackrey (1996: 11) in their seminal work discussed in detail a few problematic examples, including a person from a privileged New England family whose fate had changed as a result of a family bankruptcy. Also, in our sample, there are academics whose class location is complex unless we wanted to bracket the entire family history and focus on a single point in time. For instance, the parents of one interviewee had many different occupations. Some of them required physical work, and some did not. Some counted as wage labor, some not. Most of the time, however, the precarious family situation prevented them from living a typical middle-class life (Metzgar 2021). Second, I concur with Predrag Cvetičanin and his collaborators' (Cvetičanin et al. 2021) argument that occupational class analysis in the hybrid post-socialist societies can have only limited explanatory power when the social position is dependent on the significant transformation of market economy, constantly changing legislation and political capital. For instance, the class location of a nurse in a country which experienced rapid economic changes in recent decades is far from obvious. Nurses, who in today's Poland graduate with a college diploma and are rather well paid, can be classified as middle-class (which counter-intuitively would put them in the same class as doctors). Nurses' situation was, however, very different in the times when our interviewees were coming of age. Back then, nursing was a largely underpaid profession with little social prestige. Similarly, a few interviewees had parents who amid the democratic transition were *technically* small business owners, yet made a living from their clerical work, not from their entrepreneurship. Taking these complexities into account, the operational inclusion criteria employed in this study required the participants to have parents without higher education[4] and meet at least one of two additional conditions: (1) their parents worked in popular class or rural jobs, or (2) their family was struggling economically. This inclusive definition allowed me to compare different life trajectories involving longer and shorter distances traveled by socially mobile academics. In the context of the aversion to the very concept of class, it did not seem legitimate to ask the potential interviewees about their subjective class location (before the interview) or the sense of their distance from the middle class, which turned out to be a fruitful solution elsewhere (Ryan and Sackey 1996: 11).

[4] In two cases one of the parents had a diploma but had never made use of it in professional life.

Table 1. Key Characteristics of Interviewees

Code and nickname	Gender	Age	Academic field	Recruitment	Parent's occupation during childhood
W1 (Teresa)	Woman	30s	Social science	Social networks	great diversity with frequent changes (in service and manufacturing sectors)
W2 (Tamara)	Woman	30s	Social science	Social networks	carpenter, nurse
W3 (Estera)	Woman	30s	Social science	Social networks	manual worker, low-skilled office clerk
W4 (Cezary)	Man	30s	Social science	Social networks	various occupations, including janitor, seamstress, cleaner
W5 (Bronia)	Woman	30s	Humanities	Social networks	physical worker, small shopkeeper/store clerk
W6 (Benedykt)	Man	60s	STEM	Social networks	railway man, housewife
W7 (Janek)	Man	40s	Social science	Advertisement	driver, cleaner
W8 (Maria)	Woman	50s	Humanities	Advertisement	car mechanic, nurse
W9 (Gosia)	Woman	40s	Humanities	Advertisement	small shopkeeper/store clerk, housewife
W10 (Mikołaj)	Man	40s	Social science	Advertisement	farmer/driver, cleaner
W11 (Aneta)	Woman	40s	Social science	Advertisement	mechanic, office clerk
W12 (Sabina)	Woman	30s	Social science	Advertisement	driver, childminder
W13 (Zofia)	Woman	60s	STEM	Advertisement	driver, low-skilled office clerk, conductor
W14 (Anastazja)	Woman	40s	STEM	Advertisement	miner, housewife
W15 (Małgorzata)	Woman	40s	STEM	Advertisement	confectioner, nurse
W16 (Andrzej)	Man	50s	Humanities	Advertisement	welder, nurse
W17 (Nina)	Woman	30s	Humanities	Advertisement	factory worker, skilled craft worker
W18 (Oliwia)	Woman	40s	Social science	Advertisement	farmer/metallurgist, seamstress
W19 (Ewa)	Woman	30s	Social science	Advertisement	mechanic/farmer, low-skilled office clerk
W20 (Agnieszka)	Woman	50s	Social science	Advertisement	bricklayer, low-skilled office clerk
W21 (Stanisław)	Man	40s	Humanities	Advertisement	electrician, seamstress
W22 (Helena)	Woman	60s	Social science	Social networks	farmers
W23 (Zenon)	Man	40s	STEM	Social networks	warehouseman, skilled craft worker
W24 (Elżbieta)	Woman	60s	STEM	Advertisement	factory worker, low-skilled office clerk
W25 (Tomek)	Man	30s	Social science	Social networks	worker/farmer, farmer
W26 (Urszula)	Woman	40s	Social science	Social networks	soldier, smuggler/manual worker

The findings presented below are based on passages from interviews, which had been anonymized and slightly edited for the sake of understanding because the meticulous transcripts used at the stage of data analysis might have been difficult to understand without knowing the entire context. All the identifiers utilized in this book are nicknames. The aim of the analysis in Chapters 2–4 is to explore the factors facilitating academic careers among individuals whose parents had no university diploma and who experienced upward mobility through academia, to show what the experience of mobility looks like, and to discuss how mobility translates into cultural practices. The findings of this qualitative study can be used for further cross-cultural studies or quantitative analyses of other non-Western systems in order to uncover the mechanisms of social reproduction and the factors making the non-reproduction possible in different historical and institutional contexts.

Based on the biographical material, I conduct two different types of analysis. First, I give voice to the interviewees to show what their self-understanding and sensemaking process looked like during the interview. Limiting the analysis to this layer, however, would make the reasoning naïve. The detailed analysis of the argumentative parts of a narrative, in turn, could lead to findings that are far from being obvious or uncritical. Hence, the second track of the analysis is devoted to tracking the structure of the story told and the possible reasons for framing the story in such a way (Wengraf and Chamberlayne 2006). To go beyond "biographical illusion" (Bourdieu 1986) in the following chapters, I use sociological theories and existing findings to suggest what social processes and structures could have influenced the occurrence of particular life events in the biographies of the interviewees. The main problem inherently included in such an analysis is how to choose criteria based on which we believe that certain behavioral patterns may have been influenced by social class, if most consumption and lifestyle choices are associated with a whole range of social variables, such as gender, age, place of residence, as well as previous biographical experiences. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is not to unambiguously prove that the observed patterns and their transformations are class-based but to show that social class is one of the important factors shaping the biographical experience of entering academia because it often fosters, accelerates, or enables certain processes. The patterns presented in the following chapters are undoubtedly the result of a variety of interactions and experiences that cannot be separated even analytically, as Bourdieu noted in his famous "lemon" metaphor cited above. In order to focus on class, the study explores the biographies of upwardly mobile scholars – the individuals who crossed the borders of social class or – at least – faced identity dilemmas regarding their class positioning due to educational and professional changes. Placing a strong emphasis on social class itself was necessary because – at least in the context of the research on the academic career at the post-socialist university – this important category had been neglected (as opposed to the notable analyses of the student body mentioned before), and in public discourse, it is still often considered useless, or anachronic (see, e.g. Hartman 2023).

Chapter 2

HOW ARE THE MIRACULOUS BORN? THE ANATOMY OF UPWARD MOBILITY

In this chapter, I analyze the spontaneous life story narratives of "expatriates of the working class" (Grimes and Morris 1997: 3) and additional data to determine the most salient turning points in the biographies of upwardly mobile individuals. Building on qualitative material, I discuss what social factors were related to their academic careers. This analysis is systematic and not chronological, as it aims at discussing social mechanisms and not reconstructing the paths of mobility, which has been done elsewhere (see: Luczaj 2023a). The in-depth analysis of each of these factors allows us to observe the circumstances which made the mobility possible. Most of these factors, yet not all of them, were the same for the upwardly mobile academics and their siblings. In the following chapters, we will see in detail how on the one hand, the careers of those who escaped the collective fate of their class differ from the paths of their brothers and sisters (family interviews) and, on the other hand, from the middle-class academic "inheritors" (interviews with colleagues).

Research Problem: The Anatomy of Upward Mobility Through Post-Socialist Academia

As I argued in Chapter 1, the higher education system is one of the prime examples of social institutions where the process of social reproduction takes place. However, there are exceptions, whose fate Bourdieu's theory struggles to explain, using the vague concept of the "miraculous." Those exceptions challenge the rule that academic success is contingent on the cultural capital acquired from very early childhood (Lareau 2002; Streib 2011). Chantal Jaquet (2014), in her philosophical essay, refers to these cases as "transclasses." Although this is a revealing theory, it lacks empirical material to ground some of the post-Spinosian or post-Pascalian reflections in the lived experiences of social mobility. It remains unknown how the upwardly mobile academics narrate their mobility and how their experience can be explained by social and historical factors (Mills 1959; Bertaux 2010). This chapter closes this gap by posing the following research question: What are the factors which make upward mobility possible? In the subsequent analysis of the biographical data, I make a distinction between institution-dependent and institution-independent factors, which can lead to policies

encouraging widening participation (Óhidy 2018) and fostering the idea of an "inclusive university" (Leišytė, Deem and Tzanakou 2021), not only for students but also for academic staff.

Factors Facilitating Mobility in Post-Socialist Academia

A thematic analysis of biographical case studies (Emery and Csikszentmihalyi 1981) helped to identify the experiences shared by most of the research participants. These can be understood as mechanisms behind breakthroughs in the social structure, or at least, the typical elements of a "miraculous academic career" in post-socialist academia. In this chapter, I will discuss six recurring themes. The first three can be deduced based on Bourdieu's theory, the next two are structural and, as such, are implicitly included in the theory: the place of birth and the egalitarian nature of the Polish HE system, which explain why upward mobility in the post-socialist setting is easier than mobility in the US, the UK, or France. The last theme analyzed here, coincidence, is a conundrum for a social scientist.

The Exceptional Talent and Precocious Skills

The *Inheritors* by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1979: 23) contains a unique passage (probably the only one where they mention characteristics of advancing families) where the authors of the theory of reproduction assert that certain people are "able to overcome their cultural disadvantages by virtue of exceptional abilities and certain exceptional features of their family backgrounds". The first factor indicated in this excerpt is an individual, *exceptional* talent. The uniqueness fits well within the general "miraculous" framework of Bourdieusian theory and is often cited as one of the reasons for upward mobility. For instance, Olga Emery and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1981: 11) provided an example of a future professor who read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* at the age of 16. In the collection of our interviews, the representation of this common theme was an early recognition of exceptional talent and the appearance of *precocious* skills.

> I was in elementary school, and I don't know if I signed myself up or was selected for a recitation contest. Of "The Locomotive."[1] Well, I did well, right? And I then had that first feedback that I am… I am not ordinary. That there was something… I mean, it was already known before, because I read quite fast, and in our family, there was an anecdote that… My mother, I was joking that soon it would turn out

[1] A children's poem by Jewish-Polish author Julian Tuwim, whose other work will be an important reference point in Chapter 4.

> that I was already reading in her belly because she first started, that I could read since I was 5, then 4, you know, then she made it 3. I'm kidding, but well. I was little when I started reading (Cezary, second interview, henceforth: SI).

> Repeatedly my mother mentions that when I finally learned to read, I stopped pestering her to read something to me [laughs]. And I don't know when I started reading because I don't remember it. Mom said that I think when I was four years old. Anyway, very early. (…) When I was in the first grade of elementary school, I had already received the entire *Chronicles of Narnia*, which I read at once, all seven volumes, so by then, I must have been reading fluently (Sabina, SI).

In both excerpts above, we can see that Cezary and Sabina learned to read very early on, which is an indicator of their scholastic aptitude. Other interviewees received psychological diagnoses certifying their high abilities at school (e.g. Stanisław, who we will meet later in this chapter). Usually, future popular-class academics were very good students in elementary and high school, even if nobody, including parents, supervised them (e.g. Gosia, Helena, Małgorzata). This applies mostly to female "straight-A" students rather than male students who tended to specialize in their favorite subjects rather early while neglecting other subjects. Years later, some upwardly mobile students won national high school contests. In some cases, the preparations required acquiring the "legitimized" knowledge, e.g. in music history or philosophy. As seen from this point of view, their exceptional talent and biographical events correspond with what we know about the early life of accomplished academics in East Europe, often coming from privileged families (Wagner 2011, Poleschuk 2021).

Individual ability, however, should never be confused with social conditions that enable the talented to flourish. For instance, based on her study of working-class professors in socialist Poland, Agata Zysiak noted that instead of the "charismatic ideology" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979: 71), recognizing the "incarnated" abilities of prodigy children, the narratives emphasized the beneficial role of the family home and school (Zysiak 2016: 245). Also, in the narratives of the participants of our study, it was social influences that were more visible than individual "natural" merits.

Supportive Family

In the passage which I started this previous section with, Bourdieu and Passeron suggested that except for unique abilities, a family background matters not only for the typical inheritors from the privileged classes but also for upwardly mobile children of popular classes. Indeed, in every narrative, close family (parents and siblings) occurred as an important source of influence, although not always as a positive one. In this respect, many types of families can be identified

– a supporting family, a "foster" family, a neutral family, a "trap" family, and a family with anti-capital (Łuczaj and Kurek-Ochmańska 2023). In the positive cases, the familial support was clearly visible on several levels: financial sacrifices made by parents to help their children (e.g. Bronia, Stanisław), instilling respect for education (e.g. Estera), and emotional support despite the lack of academic qualifications (e.g. Helena). These examples help us understand what Bourdieu and Passeron meant by the "exceptional features" of their families allowing them to "overcome their cultural disadvantages."

First of all, many interviewees suggested that their material position was significantly better than the other members of popular classes who lived nearby. In some families, the parents could provide a safety net for their offspring or invest in their education. This very middle-class strategy required far-reaching sacrifices, as Andrzej's interview clearly illustrates.

> In college, I had some casual jobs, some sort of putting up posters. I remember doing other casual, physical jobs in college, but basically, my parents supported me financially. So… an extra effort was needed, primarily my father's. He worked really hard so that I could study, but mentally, we didn't agree at all (Andrzej, first interview, henceforth: FI).

The reference to disagreements with his parents, which Andrzej made here, is the key to understanding the ambiguous nature of family support. On the one hand, as we have learned, his father worked hard to give him some money, but on the other hand, the father and son disagreed on politics and the definition of manliness, which led to acts of domestic violence. Andrzej, regarded as lazy and unmanly, had been beaten by his economically supportive father. For this reason, his family could be unambiguously supportive. Stanisław's story suggests that to facilitate mobility, material resources must co-exist with a willingness to spend them on education. This assumption explains why the affluent members of the working class are not always upwardly mobile through education.

> I remember when I was a little kid, and my mother sent me to the store to get washing powder, and I bought myself two books instead of the powder. I took an awfully long time to come back home because I was afraid of her reaction, and then she said that the one thing I could be sure of was that I would never be criticized by her for buying a book (Stanisław, FI).

This story shows that the availability of reading material at home is not merely a sign of wealth (or not at all) but also signals that a family has decided to spend some of their resources on reading materials (Zuilkowski et al. 2019). It also clearly demonstrates that the home of Stanisław was different from the homes where other future professors were punished for their scientific interests and strongly

discouraged from reading books. Based on such narratives dominated by examples of encouragement and empowerment, we worked out during seminars the category of "appetite for mobility." The appetite for mobility usually meant that such a family did everything they could to allow their children to have a "better life."

> Our parents, although they did not achieve much educationally themselves, understood and cared a great deal that our educational paths were, we shall say, complete with a visible success measured by a mere diploma. They constantly repeated that education was important (Aneta, SI).
> These are the mechanisms… of that pressure that comes from changing the herd. Because there was something like that in my mother. There was some kind of great ambition. And as a result, even though she graduated only from a tailoring school (Stanisław, SI).
> My parents saw that I was super smart, intelligent, had good grades, "a girl who can handle it." So it was like: "learn, learn." My father's saying: learn, so you can do better than me (Nina, SI).

The appetite for mobility often meant that the family had a strong conviction that they were "better" and deserved better, which was clearly stated by Maria and Cezary but recurred in other interviews as well (see: Grimes and Morris 1997). Stanisław's case demonstrates, however, that the appetite for upward mobility could also have a darker side because if a sibling did not follow the upwardly mobile path, this person could have been rejected or not appreciated by the family.

> My middle [brother] had problems at home. That's because my mother saw such a very simple ladder with higher education at the top. And my middle brother had amazing talents, but totally unrelated to higher education (Stanisław, SI).

For the upwardly mobile individuals, the parents' appetite for upward mobility was a blessing, but it could also harm their brothers or sisters. Furthermore, even these popular-class families who found themselves in a relatively privileged economic situation and could support their children were prone to stereotypical social perceptions. When their efforts were not recognized, class shame was likely to occur, which was visible in the interview with Anastazja, the daughter of a miner.

> My parents, whatever they do, although they are prosperous people, because they have us, in general, they are well-off, they lack nothing, they are always the worse ones, well because my father is a miner, my mother does not work, and everyone thinks that they feel bad (Anastazja, SI).

Recognized or not, such families were, nevertheless, supportive to those education-oriented, which sharply contrasted with the non-supporting families (see: Łuczaj and Kurek-Ochmańska 2023). These families were marked by deep

problems, including severe poverty and alcoholism, but also the limiting horizons of expectations. Even if we avoid extreme examples, the privilege of having a supportive family becomes obvious. It suffices to analyze Zofia's family, which can be referred to as neutral.

> This may also be related to the mentality of my parents, who were going down and down… I did not have… They were happy. They were always proud that I had good grades, but there was no external mobilization, and how much can you mobilize internally? So I was hit by such blows of lack of self-confidence (Zofia, SI).

These "blows of lack of self-confidence" of Zofia, also reported in studies on rural students (Wasielewski 2013: 179), were induced by many families in different ways. The first usual consequence was a sense of disconnection between the world of home and the world of work (see: Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 191–210), which Bronia's colleague stressed when discussing her family of origin.

> They are certainly loving parents, but also probably, so to speak, not fully capable of understanding Bronia (Bronia's colleague).

It is quite significant that this sense of disconnection between the two worlds, although it also appeared in the narratives of the core participants, was more emphasized by their colleagues than the interviewees themselves. Perhaps, during the interview, it was easier to repeat the conversation with a popular class colleague than report one's own difficult memories.

> Sometimes she mentioned that her parents had sort of no idea about her work. They didn't know what she was actually doing. That is to say, they had this stereotypical understanding that a researcher or a lecturer was a person who worked from October to June[2] and actually only came to work to have those few classes a week and didn't actually do anything else. And writing articles is a kind of strange, incomprehensible add-on. Because 'Why would one write it?', 'Who would read it?' Right? (Tamara's colleague).
>
> As far as I remember, (…) he rather jokes a bit like that, that they [parents] totally don't understand that … That he's just in another dimension, which is… It's probably also inevitable, right, that when you leave some family tradition for another one, the family [of origin] doesn't know too much about what it's all about (Janek's colleague).

In some cases, the privileged acquaintances or partners of our core interviewees verbalized the difference between themselves and class-mobile academics. Estera's colleague and Janek's partner, both with middle-class roots, contrast

[2] In Poland, the academic year typically starts on October 1 and ends in late June.

their experience of familial mental support with the experience of the upwardly mobile academics:

> I remember that she somehow tried to tell her parents what it was all about and that this conversation was just so difficult. Well, I could always somehow talk about these things, and I also somehow worked a lot with my father. We also did some research together or published some things, so I also definitely felt such – maybe a little less now – but a kind of sense of guilt about my privilege (Estera's colleague).
> So that's what we also have in common, that I also had to prove to my parents that I would find a job for myself. Well, because they were also worried because it was a well-known fact that not all those who do PhDs stay in academia. It is well-known (Janek's partner).

The "it is well-known" ("no wiadomo") intercalation from the last excerpt is the essence of middle-class privilege. Although in this fragment, Janek's partner is narrating about convincing her family that she has made the right career choice, she, unlike Janek, for whom even the general high school (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) was "beyond the horizon," was socialized to be a good, "docile" student. She was supported by her parents and could always ask for advice. Conversely, the lack of cultural capital prevented many popular-class families from assisting their children through their educational career. This is another significant consequence of having a less supportive family. However, the impact of social class was usually merely passive: it was a lack of some material and symbolic resources or the inability to help (as in Zofia's testimony). The most clearly class-related examples of active clipping of children's wings come from stories of two interviewees, very similar to each other, who wanted to study medicine.

> Mom, it seems to me that, anyway, she passed on to us such sense [sighs] of low value because it seemed to her that if we didn't come from a family of doctors, we couldn't graduate from medicine, for example, right? A lot of my classmates went on to study medicine and pharmacy, and she always repeated that these were all doctors' children and that if someone is not a doctor's child, this person stands no chance, right? (Tamara, FI).
> Mom wanted it very much for us to be happy because she saw this work in the hospital with her own eyes and saw how hard it was and saw what sacrifices it involved, especially from the doctors, back then (…) It was a 20-hours-a-day work, and mom also saw that it was at a huge cost to private life and families. I mean, the truth was that the more prominent the specialist (…), the more messed up his or her personal life was. Mom, I mean, she told us a lot about it, and they were actually all divorced. They all had some children with problems. Simply, mom didn't want that for me (Maria, SI).

Tamara and Maria both narrated the same story of an ambitious high-school student who wanted to become a medical doctor but was discouraged from doing so by the mother, working in a subordinate position at hospital – as a nurse. Although the two interviewees judge the intentions of their mothers very differently, they both relate to the same structural process: blocking some of the possible paths of upward mobility. When interviewed, Tamara's mother made it very clear that her suggestions were "inspired" by social class, as she saw a great chasm between her family and the social elites, where the children of doctors belonged.

> Tamara started the last year of high school, full of doctors' children at that time. It was the elite who went there, and there were children who had a lot of different extra lessons and so on (Tamara's mother).

This attitude was not just a passive weakness, but it constituted precisely the opposite of the "appetite for mobility," which helped so many class-mobile academics. A sense of disconnection between the family culture and the professional culture made these interviewees' transitions more painful.

Other Role Models: Human and Non-Human

Zenon, a son of a warehouseman and skilled worker, and Andrzej, a son of a welder and a nurse, started their entire narrative, respectively, by very similar assertions that they were "really lucky to meet the right people" and that they "owe everything to serendipitous encounters with wonderful people." Both biographical narratives show most vividly in the entire sample that academic success is largely dependent on the availability of role models and "on the attitude and example of significant others in the social milieu" (Emery and Csikszentmihalyi 1981: 18). In many cases, the human role models (i.e. the members of the extended family, acquaintances, teachers) constituted a significant part at various stages of the educational careers and subsequent academic careers of the interviewees.

> My grandfather was my unique teacher and my intellectual mentor at home. I think that for him, it was a kind of realization of unfinished plans and unfulfilled ambitions from his younger years. (…) Grandpa didn't manage to finish his studies, so back then, he used his scientific interests to educate me a bit at home. Indeed, we read a lot of books. We watched (…) all kinds of popular science and history programs (Aneta, FI).
>
> My mother's sister and uncle had higher education. Well, we met with them very often at home. Both the grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side, they read a lot, so this… This [our background] was not felt as something bad at all (Elżbieta, SI).

For Aneta, it was her grandpa that was the one with an "appetite for mobility," a person who instilled ambition in her, and Elżbieta points out that she did not feel as strange at school because at least some of her relatives were highly educated. Often, the role model was a partner met at a much later phase of the life course. This was the case of Janek's middle-class spouse, who had already been mentioned, and who helped him rebuild his self-confidence. Yet, most of all, she was able to understand his problems and the peculiarities of academic work.

His mother will never understand that he spent three years writing a thirty-page-long article. For three years, he had been doing research, writing it, submitting it, and it's still going on. There are six reviews and six revisions, and it hasn't come out yet (Janek's partner).

Tamara narrates the flip side of this process by pointing out that she could not count neither on the support of her parents, nor her husband, who also experienced upward mobility, although a much "shorter" one, which impacted his habitus.

When I was writing my Ph.D. thesis, if I had had a husband from the intelligentsia, maybe he would have motivated me more. Maybe he would have supported me more in taking care of the children. My husband did not fully understand how difficult this work was and how much I needed time, first of all, and a relief, simply, in various chores, to even finish the doctorate, right? (Tamara, SI).

Table 2. Types of Role Models (narrative study)

	Family circles	**Education system**
Education	• a white-collar aunt (Zofia) • an aunt from town (Tomek) • an educated aunt (Helena) • an educated brother (Estera) • a supportive grandfather (Aneta) • a priest – a family friend (Benedykt)	• a middle-class classmate (Zenon) • an inspiring teacher (Marysia, Stanisław, Andrzej, Mikołaj) • a librarian (Andrzej) • older subculture members (Janek) • peers from the science club (Estera) • a future academic husband (Helena)
Professional work	• a Ph.D. sibling (Aneta, Estera)	• a Ph.D. supervisor (Tomek, Zenon) • a co-worker from a professorial family (Estera, Teresa) • a co-worker with middle-class background (Janek) • a former co-Ph.D. student (Bronia)

The interviewees also mentioned role models who they met in a purely institutional context – at school, e.g. an inspiring teacher, a librarian, peers from the science club, or at work, e.g. important colleagues. Aneta and Estera's case also suggests that having a Ph.D. sibling provides strong support (see: Table 2).

The experience of upward mobility, however, was also shaped by non-human agents – books, which were one of the most widely recognized examples of objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). In Bourdieusian terms, the availability of role models is dependent not only on social capital (contact with human role models) but also on cultural capital (e.g. cultural role models contained in books and other texts of culture). Many studies, in various historical and cultural contexts, have confirmed the correlation between the presence of books at home and the measures of creativity, abstract thought, and teacher's estimate of future school progress (Edwards 1974; Emery and Csikszentmihalyi 1981; Zuilkowski et al. 2019).

The theme of books, readership, and libraries was the most saturated one, based on the analysis of all the available transcripts. The vast majority of our interviewees pointed directly to the role of books and reading in their careers. They emphasized the role of a book as the first encounter with the academic culture but also stressed the fact that books were available for free in public libraries.

> Anyway, [reading] has always seemed to be an important thing in my development (…). So I don't know if it is more about contact with language or maybe some imagination exercises or something, but reading was always cool. Well, reading was also a sort of escape from some kind of reality, right? From the fact that you never knew what was going to happen, that there was no money, that your father was yelling because he was drunk, to put it nicely [laughter]. Oh yes, er. Things like that. So reading was cool, and reading was for free (Nina, FI).
>
> This aunt and her whole family went away and left us in charge of the house to take care of it. And there was such a large attic… generally books (…) I read all the books. There were probably fifty books. I don't know why, I can't remember until now, because this aunt has been gone for a long time (…) I just started to absorb these books. I don't know, and . um (4s) on the one hand, my parents couldn't tell me not to read . . well because, kind of, it's not like that I drank or smoked cigarettes, well, I wanted to read [laughter]. But my parents also started to, kind of, use it: I could read to myself when I helped with something. There was no such time for me to study or read. After returning from school, the first thing was to help on the farm (Tomek, FI).

Based on this excerpt, we can see that Tomek was rather discouraged from reading by his family, which had no intellectual ambitions. Precisely because of that, books – the non-material agents – played a significant role in his biography. While his parents might not have had bad intentions, they subscribed to the TV culture and not reading culture, one of the most common patterns of cultural consumption, analyzed in Chapter 4.

Place of Birth

Up to this point, I focused on individual merit and the role of social networks, which might have also included non-material factors. While these micro-sociological circumstances certainly played a significant role in upward mobility, there were also structural (macro-sociological) factors that must be taken into account. One of them was the place of birth. Those interviewees who were born in big cities were immediately in a better position as compared to their rural or small-town peers. Their educational plans did not require long-distance travel or relocation, so their families could support them financially. In addition, for people like Nina and Sabina, living in big cities, the choice of a very good HE institution was obvious because they offered many programs in various academic disciplines as opposed to small private universities offering degrees in just a few popular fields (e.g. management, education, IT).

> And I actually didn't feel that I had, I don't know, a harder start of any kind. Especially if I'm also from the city where I studied. I mean, it [staying in this city] was kind of, necessary to start my studies at all, well, because I knew that my parents couldn't afford to send me somewhere else, but as a result, it was also just easier for me. So that I didn't commute, I didn't have to sort of go home at weekends so that my mother would do my laundry near Rzeszow, but it was sort of all here (Nina, SI).

Zenon, although he grew up in a mid-sized city, could take advantage of this fact even earlier on. He was lucky because an important science center had just opened when he was in elementary school. This allowed him to familiarize himself with the academic culture, as a result of which, he didn't feel much disconnection from it later on. A long time before he started high school, he knew what he wanted to do in his life.

> Sometimes we were able to look inside there to see "the kitchen," these stacks of books, right, these "sages." Now I thought that, indeed, from a very early age, I saw scientists working, so I kind of knew what it entailed. It was not an "ivory tower" [said in English] anymore (Zenon, FI).

This center offered Zenon and his colleagues an opportunity to acquire cultural capital from scientists. Such a metamorphosis could also happen in a smaller town but was much more likely in a big academic center. On the other hand, people born in the pre-internet era, in rural areas and small towns, even when their economic position was relatively good, pointed out the difficulties they faced.

> Well, then, I was commuting to high school. Well, it was thirty kilometers, and I would go out with my dad to catch that bus, which was at 5:30 a.m., even though school started at 8:00. The other bus was at 8:00, so well, I wouldn't make it. So for four years, I got up at 4:45. Next, I walked a kilometer to the bus stop, and then [I spent] forty-five minutes on the bus, where at least I could sleep. Well, also, I don't have good memories from the first days in high school because then I certainly remember feeling, well, yes, like such a redneck (*wieśniak*) (Tomek, FI).
>
> For example, today, you know, living in the countryside… it seems to me that this is fundamentally different. Well, nowadays, there are a few more opportunities, you know, to take advantage of, for example, extracurricular activities, like, you can learn languages online. In fact, you don't even need a car. You don't need to get out of here to learn all of this, so I think it's a little easier now than it used to be (Oliwia, SI).

Oliwia was well aware of the fact that when she was growing up, geographic separation only reinforced the difficulties of those in the popular classes, particularly those from the countryside. For technological reasons, at the time of the interview – taking place after the COVID-19 pandemic, which popularized e-learning – the situation was much different. All these reflections stress that social class intersects with the class of place of residence. While rural or small-town popular classes had to go a long way to obtain education (in every possible sense), the urban popular classes were relatively privileged.

Egalitarian Higher Education System

Upward mobility was easier and, in some cases, possible at all because of the relatively egalitarian nature of the Polish higher education system. First, the egalitarian system allows for correcting the "wrong" choices. Unlike in France, where early educational choices shape path-dependent academic careers, in Poland, it is generally believed that everyone has the right to study at university, regardless of their educational background. Universities are very rarely considered to be ivory towers – inaccessible for people from popular classes. The rapid expansion of the entire HE sector in the 1990s had two consequences relevant for upwardly mobile individuals: nowadays, it is significantly easier to start university studies (the desire or appropriate motivation are often believed to be the only requirements), which resulted in a reducing the inferiority complex in the majority of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Wasielewski 2013: 173–184). Secondly, due to the reasons discussed in the previous chapter, mainly the socialist ideology of education for all, sharp distinctions do not exist in contemporary Poland, except for very few elitist faculties of humanities and social sciences. This makes the system more appealing (or less repulsive) to the popular classes. Furthermore, they are able to maintain at least part of their identity. With their habitus clivé and mixed dispositions, they do not always feel different from their middle-class

peers (see: Wasielewski 2013). These diverse experiences of people who did not experience simple reproduction as students or professors suggest that the original Bourdieusian notion of the "miraculous" upwardly mobile academics is, at least partly, inadequate in the post-socialist context. Instead, I suggested elsewhere (Luczaj 2023b) that in Polish academia, besides post-communist renegades (or miraculous), we can distinguish two specific types of "miraculous": the "normal miraculous" and "non-miraculous." What they have in common is their disbelief that their trajectories were unique. The normal miraculous, like Helena, who felt that studies at a prestigious university automatically made her an intellectual, or Zenon, who we met in the previous section, and who believed that at some point he just jumped into the middle-class career trajectory. The non-miraculous, in turn, lacked the objective indicators of success but also had an internal belief that their story was not entirely a success story. They often shared with the normal miraculous the conviction that upward mobility is relatively easy and does not require mastering all the middle-class dispositions.

> Here I can admit with absolute honesty that I do not have a sense of great success in my academic work. This is related to the fact that I don't have a lot of time for it, and also, at the university where I work, research work, scientific achievements are not seen as a great priority. We are engaged in many, many tasks in addition to teaching (Aneta, SI).
> Well, that's the kind of familiarity [with middle-class culture] I lack in general in many things actually, but at the same time, I know that it's not important (Nina, SI).

The ability to correct or make up for the "wrong" career choices is one of these points where France, with a rigid system of distinctions and clear hierarchies of schools, is very different from post-socialist Poland. These interviewees, who did not assimilate the middle-class culture early on, e.g. due to the contact with a role model or institution (like Zenon), were nevertheless able to significantly change their educational trajectory. Good examples were Janek and Ignacy[3], whose early choices would not predict that the first one would become a professor at the top university in Poland and the second one would become an academic at all.

> At the end of [elementary] school, eighth grade, well, you have to make some plans. And I remember something like this: high school [liceum] was in general beyond my… beyond my… beyond my horizon. Completely. It was not for me at all. (…) I recall a talk with my father, who told me: "you definitely won't go to high school because that's for girls, and you need to get a profession." Because in [our region], everyone must have a profession (Janek, FI).

---

[3] In this case, the pseudonym used elsewhere has been changed to protect the interviewee's privacy.

> [After leaving the order] I returned to my village for a year. It was the worst year of my life. I don't know how I can express it. "Rejection," I guess. Yes, well, you could call it that. It was such a social rejection. Because, after all, the rural environment is very… When a person is in a religious order, they expect him to become a priest. And when he doesn't become a priest, then… They either don't recognize him or they 'don't know' who he is (Ignacy, FI).

The educational path of Janek was surprising, or indeed "miraculous." After graduating from a vocational school, he decided to complete some further education because when his mother died, he was entitled to welfare benefits, and also his father encouraged him to do so for pragmatic reasons. Only later did he apply for college, but it took him two attempts because, at first, he did not pass the entrance exam. Thanks to the free-of-charge education and welfare benefits, Janek could stay in the educational system and did not reproduce the working-class career of his relatives. Similarly, Ignacy – after making a bad decision to join a religious order, was able to change his biographical action plan, graduate from a university with a master's diploma, and finally get his Ph.D. Although, as we have seen in the excerpt above, a temporary return to his parent's village was very unpleasant, he managed to recover without the necessity to undertake a working-class occupation. His modest family was able to initially pay for his studies because the fees in Poland were never exorbitant.

Secondly, it seems that the symbolic distances which had to be traveled were shorter in Poland as compared to France and the US or the UK. Helena, our oldest interviewee who began her studies in the 1980s, when asked about fractures in her academic career, replied that she did not have any hesitation about whether or not she belonged to the academic world.

> It seemed to me that if I went to college, to a good university, the best university in Poland, to study history, with 4 candidates for 1 place, and I was admitted, so it seemed so obvious to me that if I got a master's degree then I thereby enter this class of maybe not intellectuals, but, at that time, intelligentsia. So it was obvious to me that this was my path (Helena, SI).

This general attitude of the "normal miraculous," who *do not feel exceptional*, despite objective distances which had been separating them from the dominant classes in their childhood or middle-class colleagues later on (see: Luczaj 2023), fits well with the society, which for a few decades of state socialism was relatively poor and undifferentiated in this respect at the moment when the interviewees pursued their university studies. Material differences, in the form known from the US (Hurst 2012), did not exist or were largely blurred. Many interviewees who remembered the 1970s and 1980s pointed out that the cultural distinctions were less visible because the economic situation was hard for most families at that time.

> This reality in which I was a child, the 1970s, the time of shortages, affected everyone in that period. It didn't just affect me, as it were, because of where I lived or who my parents were (Agnieszka, SI).

Also, Bronia's friend, born in the 1980s and raised in the 1990s, at some point in his interview made a disclaimer which suggests that even in the young Polish capitalism the material differences between students were not so obvious.

> I didn't know Bronia from that period [adolescence]. As we came to college, everyone functioned similarly then, so these things [class differences] obliterated (Bronia's colleague).

"Student life," a category to which many interviewees alluded, is self-explanatory in East Europe. In the 1980s (and earlier), it meant that people coming to a big city for their studies had to live in newly built, large, modernist dorms, usually in very modest conditions (see: Wasielewski 2013: 176). Starting from the 1990s, other accommodation options became available, but all those "student flats" were not very comfortable and usually poorly equipped.

> In our times, we lived in the student dormitory or in flats, which had all been of a similarly pitiful standard. We fed ourselves daily with some groceries from a discount store. We dressed in err/ dressed in second-hand stores. As if we all lived by a fairly similarly modest standard, right? (Aneta, FI).

Obviously, such "student life" is not always the same in other countries. Taking into account that both Bronia and Helena studied at very prestigious universities, it is rather unlikely that their American or French peers would discuss the egalitarian atmosphere of their studies, or harsh working conditions while being accommodated in one of the college dorms.

The relatively egalitarian nature of the Polish HE system did not mean, however, that the social class could not be felt at all, as we have seen in Ignacy's example. Similarly, in other narratives, there were numerous "class moments" when one could feel why the class location was very important. Interestingly, however, these moments often occurred in relatively elitist high schools and not relatively egalitarian universities, even if highly ranked. Remaining at Aneta's example, we can see how the class could just "strike" someone convinced he or she came from a regular background.

> Umm, a friend was the daughter of a teacher and a small businessman. She asked me if I would go with her to the store (…) because she needed to buy pants. And we went to this store, it was a typical chain store, and it came as a shock to me that my friend bought herself pants which cost, I don't know, about 1/3, or 1/4 of what

> my mother was making at that time [per month – Author]. ((2s)) Um, like, I didn't comment on that in any way. For her, it was an obvious situation, and for me, it was a gap and/or a big cognitive shock. (Aneta, FI).

This egalitarian nature of the Polish HE system could also be felt at a later stage when our interviewees transformed from students into employees. Even if we disregard the agricultural university programs – turning rural origins into an asset, as one of our interviewees explained – in many fields, the class background did not play such a significant role in everyday work, which does not mean that it did not have any negative consequences (see: Chapter 3 for more details). This is clearly visible in the case of Aneta and Tamara, both born in the 1980s and both professors at private universities in mid-sized cities. The growth of such institutions, usually not prestigious and teaching-oriented, allowed people like them to become academics without middle-class dispositions and consecrated cultural capital, and yet not feel estranged. Their narratives resemble one another because they both stress the egalitarian nature of such institutions.

> I have an irresistible impression that people who come from the world of academia or intelligentsia are maybe 10%, and the rest is upward mobility, to put it simply (Tamara, SI).
> Among us are also colleagues who did not go to work in the academy straight after graduation but worked somewhere in business and, for example, did their Ph.D. later as independent scholars and only later moved to academia. Anyway, my story is also somewhat similar to this (…) We have such very, very collegial relations. (…) Well, really, in our daily life, it does not play a huge role who has what degree, title, who works in what position (…) Or everybody is on first-name terms, regardless of seniority[4] (Aneta, SI).

In these excerpts, Tamara stressed the different social composition of the professoriate, and Aneta emphasized the flat relations between university teachers, which by no means is a standard in Polish academia. By doing so, both interviewees depicted the rather unusual, different from the Western perspective, egalitarian spaces within academia. These more egalitarian institutions do not fit into the theory of reproduction and can be referred to as vehicles of social mobility.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the faculty experiences, we can notice again the heterogeneity of Polish HE systems. The narrations of Janek and Urszula, both working at some of the most prestigious Polish universities in the field

---

[4] Which is rather atypical in Poland, unlike the US, and points to flat collegial relations. This cultural pattern is an antithesis of the old aristocratic hierarchical order, and as such, is more compatible with the popular class "familiarity" (see: Chapter 4).

of humanities, are in stark opposition to what the interviewees represented by Tamara and Aneta witnessed. Tomek and Urszula, in an almost identical way, talk about their fellow students and colleagues.

> Actually, most of these graduated from after some super schools in Warsaw, the best, you know, high schools in Poland. Everyone had, you know, perfect [foreign] language skills. Great competencies, you know, someone played the violin, someone played the piano, someone had a villa in Żoliborz, right? So their parents were just from great backgrounds in terms of education and work (Urszula, FI).
> Here [at a prestigious university], a straightforward reproduction is definitely taking place (…) And now I'm learning there, on such unpleasant occasions, e.g. when someone's father dies, it turns out that he was an important professor. Now, for example, there was such a situation in my department. So definitely, there are predominantly children of the intelligentsia. And they also talk about it (…) Whereas at [mid-prestige university in a major academic center], it was mixed. But rather [among faculty], there were no people completely from the popular classes. Rather, the children of teachers (Janek, SI).

Janek – thanks to different positions at different universities he held in the past – observes that the social composition of the student body is largely dependent on the type of university. Urszula, in turn, in the entire interview makes various similar references to the class privilege of students and discusses the privilege of her upper-class colleagues. These narrations illustrate that even within an egalitarian HE system, there are institutions where reproduction is a clearly visible process, as predicted by Bourdieu. Furthermore, even the normal miraculous could have some moments of doubt. This was the experience of Estera. Since she was a very successful student in elementary and high school, she knew very early on that she wanted to get a university diploma, and she revealed the docility characteristic of the middle classes (Bourdieu 1984).

> I don't recall such a situation that I hid that I was from Opatówek [a small town]. Rather, I even played a kind of a victim. It was like, 'guys, look how much I had to do to fucking get here from this Opatówek' (…) 'See what kind of effort it was that I'm here?' Sometimes I use this argument in such conversations, which is probably not cool, but well, sometimes, I use this argument (…) with people for who it was much easier to get to certain places, for example (Estera, SI).

As we have seen, Estera used her class history as an asset. In the entire interview, although she was proud of her mobility and did not problematize the process of *becoming* a faculty member, she oftentimes stressed the difficulties associated with *being* one (see: Chapter 3).

In brief, this section suggested that upward mobility in a post-socialist system could have been facilitated by the egalitarian nature of the HE system because it created unusual egalitarian spaces (e.g. in private universities). This does

not mean that such mobility was ever easy, which was suggested by Estera's case, and what becomes more evident in Chapters 3 & 4. Before that, and to complete the picture of mobility, we should consider the last very important factor, which is neither micro- nor macro-structural.

Coincidence

This factor is what we can refer to as "good luck," or fortunate coincidence, which facilitates mobility. Although framing one's story in terms of coincidence or happenstance is more typical for non-academic biographical literature (Westover 2018) than social analysis, some social scientists also argue that "coincidental quality" does not have to, and can't always be attributed to other social factors but should function as an independent analytical category besides structure and agency (Atkins 2017; Frank 2016; Hodkinson 2009; Loveday 2018; Sauder 2020). Howard Becker (1998: 45), in turn, observed that usually, "things aren't exactly random, but they aren't completely determined either." In other words, he suggests analyzing society rather in terms of "option luck" (a matter of how deliberate and calculated gambles turn out to be) than "brute luck" (a matter of how risks fall) (Dworkin 2000). This inclusion of luck as a fully-fledged variable is also visible within the new working-class studies. For instance, Hurst and Warnock (2015: 115) claim that connections between working-class mentors and students on campus were "formed through happenstance rather than through a formal identification or mentoring programs." In our study, the coincidence was a discursive category used by the interviewees to explain their life paths. Zenon, for instance, argued that his upward mobility was a result of a mix of "a little bit of self-determination, but also luck" and believed that one needs to work hard to be noticed "sooner or later." Oliwia, in turn, just like many other interviewees, believed that good luck was part of her success.

> I never had such plans [to work in higher education] somehow. It seems to me that, that, that it was kind of, it was a coincidence after all (Oliwia, FI).

Many other interviewees emphasized the role of coincidence in their careers when discussing other significant factors. In this sense, coincidence was never a sufficient condition for upward mobility, but many narrators believed it was a necessary one. According to Sennett's theory, such framing of a narrative is the result of a self-concept according to which professional success is something that *happens* to working-class people and – as a consequence of disturbed self-worth – is not perceived as a straightforward outcome of their ability. For instance, Mikołaj focused on an unexpected change of educational plans due to the undelivered application, and Andrzej accidentally met an

important role model. Anastazja stressed the encouragement to begin Ph.D. studies while having a different action plan and Ewa a sudden opportunity to collaborate on a European project. Gosia narrated an unanticipated job offer, and Aneta argued that non-academic professional experience enabled her to return to academia. It is rather a difficult task to assess whether framing one's career in terms of serendipity is just a discursive strategy likely to exist among those who have impaired self-esteem or a profound insight into one's own biography. We obviously can't tell what would have happened, if there was no serendipity, e.g. would Zenon not have had an opportunity to visit regularly his science center? Would his habitus find a way to upward mobility anyway? Even if so, his career path would look quite different. In such a sense, it seems reasonable to acknowledge that good luck plays certain roles in professional careers, not necessarily in academia, but – at the same time – the hidden injuries of class make such a narrative much more likely to occur.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The "anatomic" analysis of biographies of popular class academics in contemporary Poland suggests that the experience of upward mobility in the post-socialist settings is associated with early socialization into reading, exceptional talent, supportive family, and the presence of other role models. Moreover, it is facilitated by overarching structural factors such as the egalitarian nature of the Polish HE system, which made getting a college diploma a more attainable objective, or place of birth, which favored city dwellers. There are also significant life events that should be treated as coincidences, which often boost the academic careers of the upwardly mobile. When we juxtapose these themes, reflecting the current state of the academic field, with the findings from Zysiak's (2019a) study on socialist professors born in Poland roughly half a century earlier, we can track the differences among many similarities linking mobile academics now and then. Most importantly, the influence of the political field had a rather limited influence, as in contemporary Poland, universities are highly autonomous (despite some attempts of the government to interfere with academic freedom), there is no affirmative action anymore, and the institutional solutions supporting working-class and first-generation academics are limited, as compared to the American or British programs (King and McPherson 2021).

Analytically, the presented factors facilitating mobility can be divided into life events (individual level) and structural features of the Polish society (structural level). The influence of structural factors on the individual level is no surprise for a sociologist. For instance, as I have argued, the place of birth determines the

horizon of possibility or the structure of opportunity. Nevertheless, we should not forget that individual experiences also shape the way academia is organized, e.g. the popular habitus of someone entering the field of academia has the potential to change this field, e.g. make it even more egalitarian. The more revealing is the division of these factors into institution-dependent and independent. This distinction would facilitate the creation of policies that can be introduced in relation to the key career turning points where policies are needed. All the institution-dependent factors associated with school rules, models, universities, and selection mechanisms at every stage of education can be influenced by policies. On the other hand, it is vital to recognize that also institution-independent factors can be indirectly influenced. Although individual ability and primary socialization within the family seem to be largely independent of *institutional measures*, policies are much needed to compensate for the deficiency of cultural capital and family-mediated social capital. The theme of readership makes us realize how important the support for public libraries is and conversely, how devastating the neoliberal reforms – introducing austerity measures – resulting in a decreased number of libraries and community centers can be (Luczaj, Dolińska, Kurek-Ochmanska, in press). For working-class professors, such facilities were not only places where culture could be accessed for free but also places where they could acquire social capital. The theme of role models, in turn, calls for designing solutions for those who could not count on stocks of social capital available in their families. It shows the need for initiatives targeted at widening participation and subsequent support of first-generation academics in the form of discussion clubs, extracurricular activities, and individual tutoring (King and McPherson 2021). The empirical analysis from Chapters 3 & 4 is needed to develop the policy implications, which I indicated here, and the concluding part of the book further discusses.

Chapter 3

THE BURDEN OF A METAMORPHOSIS OR A BLESSING IN DISGUISE? THE PHYSIOLOGY OF UPWARD MOBILITY

Contrary to the popular neoliberal claim, upward mobility is not an unequivocally positive experience for an individual but comes at a certain cost. By looking at the processual aspect of crossing cultures, from the culture of origin (working-class or rural) to the middle-class academic world understood as a culture of departure, I discuss in detail this painful transition as well as emphasize its lesser-known bright sides. Thus, this chapter focuses on the physiology of upward mobility, i.e. the way how travelers across class lines (Ryan and Sackrey 1996: 17) adapt to the new environment. In this chapter, I discuss, inter alia, the class-induced fear of public speaking and the transfer of cultural capital to the family of origin. The lived experiences of the upwardly mobile academics suggest that mobility is a complex process, which often results in the need to perform arduous biographical work and shapes the non-classical academic habitus able to change the fossilized structures and the academic doxa.

Realizing the Class Difference

One of the most painful experiences of upward mobility was the very process of realizing the existence of class differences. The egalitarian nature of the Polish education system (see: Chapter 2) resulted in a situation where class differences could be obscured for an extended period of time. In contrast, in highly stratified societies, the difference is often visible on many occasions. For instance, contrary to the class-segregated elementary schools in the U.S., the post-socialist schools were often variegated in terms of class, and therefore at later stages of an academic career, you could not really judge someone's social position based on the particular school this person had attended, or the district where one lived.

Most typically, upwardly mobile academics became aware of class differences in high school, especially if this was an elite high school populated by the children of middle classes, often the offspring of doctors, lawyers, professors, or business people, who could and had converted their economic capital into cultural.

> In high school, during breaks, there were stories of what the parents of classmates do, and I used to be like this: 'Oh, and I have to go to the toilet.' Or: 'Oh gee, I was supposed to return the book to the library.' There were such situations. Now, I am terribly ashamed and feel terribly stupid about it, but as a teenager, such situations occurred (Aneta, SI).
>
> It was harder for me… I mean, yes, I certainly had it up the hill in class… At the beginning of elementary school, I didn't have it up the hill at all because everyone was/ (…) In high school, money was a huge problem at the beginning, and then Laura [a middle-class girlfriend] formed a shield over me. In the sense that together we kind of struggled with different things. She, by the way, very quickly found a job for me (Cezary, SI).

Although many interviewees stated that class markers became visible at this stage, social distinctions in Poland at that time were still less clear-cut that in the US, where the social class could be judged by the cars driven by a family or the clothes worn by students. Being raised in Poland in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s meant that students could not immediately notice class differences by looking at their peers. The sharp social contrasts became visible only in the 1990s when our youngest interviewees were finishing their elementary education.

Sometimes the "moment of class" took place later, and it was usually related to an infringement of academic customs or norms. In Mikołaj's case, it was connected with the use of the home language in university settings. This was a clear example of how one's ability to have a successful career in academia is impacted by the social background of this person. What seemed natural to him was considered an ethnic slur in other settings.

> Once, we were discussing a doctoral student who was writing a paper on the Jewish communities, and I said something like that: "oh, she's writing a Jewy piece [o Żydkach]."[1] Do you know how that appalled her? I thought she was going to kill me. Only after some time did I realize that it could have been… Because she then replied: 'No-one will work [here]/ No person who has such views about Jews, that he will call them "Żydki." It's like someone would say, "Polacks." This is just as offensive (Mikołaj, SI).

For Mikołaj, his unfortunate expression resulted in the breakup of a good relationship with his Ph.D. supervisor. Although taking into account that academia, at least on the level of declared values, is an inclusive environment, overt class-based discrimination was rather rare. The only example comes from Mikołaj's interview, who recalls an incident happening straight after the successful defense of his Ph.D. thesis, long after the "Jewish" incident.

---

[1] A pejorative term used in Polish (see: Wierzbicka 2015).

> Probably the worst words I heard came from my supervisor, already after the defense [of my Ph.D. thesis]. The next day, she said that she had helped me with this doctorate out of pity. So it was so demotivating. Was it worth my effort? Why did I make so many sacrifices? Why did I deny myself various things to get this? And someone tells you that this… Because she's so very classist [klasowa], so she says that those who are from a high society [wyższych sfer], well, they have high capital, and you, you have low capital. You don't deserve it (Mikołaj, FI).

Although Mikołaj did not reveal that in his first interview, after the second one, I could understand better the context in which the advisor voiced this painful opinion. Even if – compared to Mikołaj's story – realizing the difference was a longer process, with less spectacular breakups and problems, it involved a deep sense of unfairness, which for very different reasons occurred in Teresa's, Stanisław's, and Nina's narratives.

> The point is that perhaps the most important feature of such upward mobility is that a person cannot rely on reproduction. One enters the environment, one is given tasks, and the observation of one's family environment does not help this person to perform these tasks. I mean, I'm not able, on the basis of how my grandpa farmed or how my dad worked, to do better here (Stanisław, SI).
>
> Klara, by the fact that her father is a professor, that she is well-known, that she is from Wroclaw, and so on… For example, people call her with various job offers. And, I don't know, half of the big and small jobs, I ever had, I had thanks to Klara. At least. If not most of them (Teresa, SI).
>
> There's a blogger, for example, from cultural studies, whose father is a professor of philosophy, and the mother is a professor of, I don't know, something else. And so I think to myself: God, what's the problem at all with being a doctor of cultural studies in such a case? They should probably give the title right away, automatically. Well, I have this feeling that as if she worked much less than, for example, I worked (Nina, SI).

All these narrators point to middle-class privilege: structural underpinnings of an academic career, which at the same time make the children of middle classes reproduce their position, and the class mobile academics work much harder than their classmates or colleagues. These effects of class are relatively easy to be attributed to sheer luck or individual differences by people who did not have the experience of upward mobility, e.g. when they themselves came from the privileged classes. It is less surprising that the socially sensitive upwardly mobile academics could easily identify them than that this class privilege was also commented on by the colleagues of our core interviewees. Bronia, Cezary, and Zofia's colleagues, who came from very different backgrounds – the first two from the intelligentsia, and the third one from a rural family – saw these inequalities clearly. Hence, we can see that this difference, or the academic privilege, was also realized by people from families of the intelligentsia or simply professors' families.

> At the very moment, when you appear, so to speak, in this world of culture and science, you succeed in your mobility, so to speak, you notice that around you are the sons and daughters of some famous people or people who have a huge amount of capital brought from home, cultural capital. And we didn't have that[2]. (…) I think it's such a neoliberal habit that you shouldn't pay attention [to social background] because it's mannerless or that you shouldn't look at your background because there's something wrong with it. And all of a sudden, you notice that this background determines who a person is and has a huge impact, and it would be foolish not to pay attention to it. So that [class] dimension was certainly strong because it was also over the years… She's an extremely frugal person, she manages her money very well, but she always had little of it (Bronia's colleague).
>
> And I have to tell you about this [his popular-class colleague's Ph.D. defense exams], in contrast, because my dad worked at the university, and I used to go there as a child to see Ph.D. defense exams (Cezary's friend).
>
> Habilitation[3] can be done in different ways, and some people have parents, while others do not have such parents. Regarding this background, situations that facilitate life in… I'm talking about the higher education sector and such various strange situations that, well, don't necessarily stimulate you to do something. I can observe it. It's always been like that (Zofia's colleague).

The upwardly mobile academics could have felt out of place, however, not only because of direct interactions in the academic sphere but also in other social milieus significant for their mobility. A prime example is a situation where a class mobile academic was not accepted by a family of a middle-class spouse.

When I brought Janek home, it was a surprise (…) My mother reacted not very ok because my mother began to laugh nervously. And it was such a very unpleasant reaction, and she didn't know what to do. And Janek is a shy person. Well, this is also class-related (Janek's partner).

> [My wife's] Grandparents, you know, had a tenement house in Kielce [a relatively small Voivodeship capital]. In Kielce, but still, they had their tenement house. So you know, I felt there, you know, like a bull in a china shop, right?
>
> **In what sense? I would like to…**
>
> For instance, you know… with the mother-in-law. She claimed that, when leaving, I opened the door, and I slammed it [laughter]. That I stomp, right? (…). I had a special plate. I had such a big plate because I would leave crumbs. Everyone else had a small plate (Tomek, SI).

---

[2] Despite the sense of being unprivileged, his class position was nevertheless very different (a well-educated father, both parents with stable jobs). In the remainder of the interview, Bronia's friend provides more context on that and points to his privilege compared to Bronia's situation.

[3] A second, more, advanced Ph.D. thesis. Widespread title in continental Europe.

These radical examples of symbolic violence enable us to understand why realizing the difference is a painful process. Although, over time, the situations mentioned above were sorted out, the social suffering associated with them was memorized and remembered. These situations made the narrators especially sensitive to class inequalities in academia and beyond.

Not Fitting in Academia: Estrangement and Fear

Once it became clear that middle-class background was an asset within academia and working-class background could be a burden, doubts would start to occur, exactly as predicted by a classical theory of social mobility coined by Pitirim Sorokin (1927) nearly a century ago. Contemporary literature emphasizes that the sense of not fitting in or unbelonging (see e.g. Butler 2021; Ricket and Morris 2021) requires "class crossovers" (Jensen 2014) or "tranclassess" (Jaquet 2014) to undertake emotional labor to overcome a sense of strangeness in an unfamiliar organizational culture. In our sample, these reactions took two basic forms: the general estrangement and the class-induced fear of public speaking.

Not fitting in was a general feeling that one is not in a proper place (Crew 2021) or the sense of "splitting into two" (*dédoublement*) (Gaulejac 2016), which Zofia, a natural scientist in her 50s, stated explicitly, or hybridity (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993; Jensen 2014), which Estera, a two decades younger social scientist, makes more clear than any other interviewee in this project.

> I feel very bad because they [educated people in her circles] only brag that one is a doctor, that one is, I don't know, a military man or someone else. (…) 'someone is a prosecutor.' And it just doesn't suit me (Zofia, SI).
> With whom can you live if you're a person composed of a peasant, a worker, and an intellectual in one body, right? My boyfriend has a higher education, although obtained in Białystok,[4] and I don't know how educated he is in his specialty (…). Well, he is a person who works, a little by life decision, a little by necessity, in a factory. He is just such a very pragmatic person (Estera, SI).

In Estera's case, the theme of "two worlds" was present in both interviews. In the first one, while explaining that among her friends were very different people, she put it like this:

> But in my case, really, there were such two different worlds that if you place one next to the other, I don't know who would be more scared of whom, right? (Estera, FI).

---

[4] Although Bialystok is the capital of Podlaskie voivodeship, its universities, in general, are not well-reputed.

The narratives of Estera, Ewa, and Cezary, all social scientists in their 30s, provided us with detailed examples of estrangement. Although every excerpt below refers to a different situation, they share the same overlying emotions.

> We were at a conference, and so we were talking about some bullshit, and here 'I was the president of something-something, and later "I was somewhere with attorney X.' 'And my daughter's godmother, she is, in general, a president of no-one-knows-what.' And later, one feels so tiny. My dad was the one who knew a carpenter, not a CEO (Ewa, SI).
>
> And in such a professional sense, you know what, well, all the time, I feel such a pain that I just don't catch up with the reading. You know, it's a kind of… For this reason, I'm also terribly irritated by Kornel [an academic colleague], for example, when he just rants about, you know, the fourth reference to some guy I don't even know (…) You know, it's not always Kornel, who I can dismiss, because I just find him absurd, right, and he's ridiculous in his behaviors, but there are a lot of people… But he's just… You know what, he kind of pisses me off class-wise (Cezary, SI).
>
> I experienced one of the biggest shocks in general [in the scientific association]. Because I met people who had really been getting ready to become academics their entire life. This surprised me in general because I would probably never have had such an idea on my own [they were in their 20s at the time]. And they were totally well-read. They were amazingly erudite. In a great many fields, there were already such discussions going on, which I was unable to join. I just listened to them (…) I was able to talk about the organization of science. On the other hand, I was unable, for a long time, to talk about some abstract things because the people were well-read. I was always amused a little bit by the association. (…) I recalled my friends from Podkarpacie, with whom I was in close regular contact, and we went to a lot of parties, and I had this "aha, okay, good" [laughs]. In a sense, they were a little funny, right? (…) excuse my word, they were stuck up, right? (Estera, FI).

As we have seen, the sense of being out of place could take on various cognitive forms, narrated as a shock (Ewa), irritation (Cezary), or amusement associated with estrangement (Estera). Such tension can be felt by people with various social backgrounds as a consequence of culture contact (Fortes 1936). The unease of upwardly mobile academics is, however, enforced by symbolic violence and shaming associated with sharp symbolic boundaries between the realm of academia and the world of popular-class jobs. Upward mobility through academia is a clear example of the situation when, a working-class person accepts as legitimate what he or she "believes is undignified in itself, and in accepting the power of educated people" he or she "feels more inadequate, vulnerable, and undignified" (Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 78). Some colleagues discussed it directly with our core interlocutors or observed it.

> I had the impression that sometimes Mikołaj does not know how to find himself in various situations here in the academy, which are "inflated," unnatural, and excessively elitist, I would say (Mikołaj's colleague).
> She also, sort of, talked a lot about this. That she doesn't fit in or doesn't fit in this environment (Estera's colleague).

In the recollections of colleagues and friends, there were many "moments of class" when co-workers commented on the "otherness" of the upwardly mobile individuals due to their unorthodox behavior. For instance, Zofia was perceived as "being too loud," what her colleague explicitly recalls and what she stressed in her main narrative. In Bronia's case, who we heard was a frugal person, a class exposing event took place when her class "practicism" took over, which made the foreign professor she was assisting confused.

> When we were organizing such a conference years ago, to which such an important American professor came, Bronia took care of him and escorted him to the hotel (…) and Bronia said that she must go to this hotel. Since she paid for it with the money [of a Prestigious University], she must have known what the standard was, and she had to see it. And he was embarrassed and wondered if she was suggesting something to him, some erotic suggestion, maybe [laughs]. But she said that she didn't care and she was going to check what the room looked like and whether they spent the money well. Yes, so that's the type of personality, and she… She didn't even care a bit that someone might misunderstand, and something could come out awkwardly because she knew her motive and acted accordingly (Bronia's colleague).

Marysia, in turn, points to the idea that, most often, it is the language that reveals the deeply concealed class divides, which corresponds with Tomek's experience.

> You know, we bring a certain language from home. And I, of course, at my home, we always read a lot, so I also learned this language from books, but some things remain, right? For example, you know, teeny-weeny things like, you know, "tern on" instead of "turn on" ("włanaczać zamiast włączać"), or such typical linguistic mistakes, which you bring from your family environment. I remember that a couple of times, it was pointed out to me that I don't express myself the way I should. Once, it was pointed out to me that I accent words incorrectly. These are, I see it that way, violent forms of disciplining. Those that sort of let you know that you are still aspiring (Marysia, SI).
> But we still laugh about it [laughs]. I said: "My <u>brother have</u> a baby" (*Mojemu bratowi urodziło się dziecko*), right? And she looked at me like that and… And you know, her grandfather had a college degree, but she was never like that [unfriendly]… In general, we laugh about it non-stop (Tomek, SI).

This general sense of not fitting in also results in the fear of speaking in public. Obviously, there are factors that can explain the fear of public performance in different ways than social class. Nevertheless, both Tomek, whose mistake was just described, and Janek, who felt linguistic insecurity, associated their problems with their class origins. They were basically afraid of the effects of the phenomenon commonly referred to as "class humor" (Scheff 1990: 133), i.e. the shaming of the ruled class, stemming from "class hostility" (Bennett et al. 2009) and resulting in "class embarrassment" (Jones 2010).

> I've already spoken at Polish conferences. I didn't get nervous. It was even fun for me. Including some discussions, such fierce ones, but when I would go to international conferences, it was always stressful for me, for linguistic reasons precisely. ((1s)) It's just that my colleagues were learning a [foreign] language when I was in this vocational high school. Every Tuesday, I went to the workshop. It was terrible. We had to see and build many things there. All Tuesday, I remember. ((1s)) So my colleagues were learning languages, and then I had to go to these workshops (Janek, FI).
>
> And you know, well, they were announcing the results. And I felt suddenly like, I don't know as if I was, I don't know, 14, 15 years old. And [I realized] that I was supposed to take a stand at that moment, and in general, in this hall it's, you know… this one, and that one, and well all those who are with the jury and… and you have to say something. And I remember that I was mumbling. I had such a feeling as if someone had just brought me here from this village of mine, brought me to Warsaw, put me in front of a microphone and in front of, I don't know, a hundred people, and [instructed] 'say something' (Tomek, FI).

The most paralyzing, class-induced stress comes, however, from the narrative of Urszula, a scholar who recalls what she did do when she was invited to be a keynote speaker at a recognizable national conference.

> A turning point for me, I think, was such a crisis moment when I was invited to the closing debate of the entire conference. (…) And I had agreed, but a month before that debate… As if… I started to have such a panicky fear that I called Nowicki [a program committee member] and said I wouldn't be able to make it. (3s) And it was so difficult for me because it was, you know, such a very big honor (…) I knew that if I sat there, I would have been paralyzed, that I would either cry or have such a shaky voice… That I would just die of shame, and I told Nowicki that I wouldn't be able to [do it]… That I just couldn't make it (…). And that was a terribly difficult moment (Urszula, FI).

Not fitting in stemmed from the "looking-glass self" (Cooley 1922), an impression the upwardly mobile individuals thought their new colleagues might have of them. Tomek was ashamed of his rural roots, and Urszula contrasted her

parochialism with the cultural sophistication of the other academics. In Janek's case, the fear of public speaking was associated with the insufficient command of foreign languages as well as a very limited international travel experience, which is analyzed in detail in Chapter 4, along with other cultural practices. The recurring theme of missing transnational capital in this understanding seems to be crucial in the Polish semi-peripheral academic system as opposed to the French or American one, where the knowledge of one's own culture and language is sufficient to be a successful academic (Case 2017). Limited language skills were the interviewees' Achilles' heel, which blocked their access to global science. This sense of deficit was voiced by most of the interviewees themselves, except for those whose families were able to invest in their future due to the "appetite for upward mobility", as analyzed in Chapter 2. It was, however, rather unusual that parents had sufficient cultural capital (willingness and vision) and economic capital (resources to put the willingness into practice) to let their children acquire linguistic capital, not to mention enabling them to have cross-cultural encounters. Even if some interviewees could study some foreign languages, this opportunity was based on their social capital, especially if one began their education well before 1989.

> Grandma also found him a neighbor who wanted to [teach] him… Because Janek wanted to learn Russian. Well, what language [could you study] back then, right? He was born in the 1970s, so what language was he supposed to learn then? So he wanted to study Russian. Also, his mother told him: "Why do you need it?". Well, his grandmother got him a dictionary, well, and a neighbor who knew Russian was teaching him (Janek's partner).

This linguistic deficit manifested itself in the form of a lack of familiar relationship with foreign languages among working-class kids, even if they were able to "make up" for it later on. The sense of not fitting in persisted, however, for years and decades. Moreover, the narratives of their middle-class colleagues, coming from the intelligentsia, suggest that these fears were not groundless. Although sympathetic, they clearly pointed out linguistic capital as a distinctive feature of their working-class colleagues.

> The assessment of his language skills from the perspective of the privileged classes is rather critical: well, it's sufficient, but he is not fully satisfied because, you know, he could do better because he probably, so to speak, was not taught these languages in childhood, so it is not a very sophisticated knowledge, but completely sufficient. Such a working one, one might say, right? Not particularly elegant, but communicative… English especially. With German [I don't know], because I have not heard him. He sort of reads. He understands roughly, but I think he is afraid to speak it (Janek's colleague).

> So, Mikołaj knows foreign languages – and this is very funny – in such a way that he can get along with anyone in any language and he makes friends right away, very easily. And he is very eager to get in touch, but this is a very superficial knowledge of languages, such very basic communication skills, but this does not prevent him at all from making friends with Erasmus students or foreign guests. And that's what's so amazing to me, that knowing five words, for example, he's already best friends with someone, and they're already trying to talk to each other about something [laughs] (Mikołaj's colleague).

Summing up this part, except for Mikołaj, who was undaunted by his rather limited language skills, in all these three cases, the recovery from class-induced shyness was a long process. Janek's partner, a person of middle-class origin, argued that their relationship helped him to undergo a metamorphosis.

> It seems to me if I can praise myself, in [the context of] this relationship. What I could give to Janek in such a situation, where he is upwardly mobile and needs… It's certainly my confidence, which is obviously class-related and learned (Janek's partner).

This excerpt explicitly points out the role of significant others in reducing the sense of estrangement. In Tomek's case, the significant other was not a life partner but an academic mentor who told him that he had to try to apply for awards. Urszula and Estera did not have such a mentor and struggled with outbursts of panic.

Deep career uncertainty

Not fitting in often went hand in hand with deep uncertainty – doubts associated with career prospects – which could be accompanied by impostor syndrome (Mikrut and Luczaj 2023). Disturbed confidence or a sense of self-worth is, by no means, the unique experience of working-class individuals, since it has been traced among as variegated social categories as female CEOs, executives, managers, scientists, doctors, and medical students, as well as parents, and users of luxury goods – to mention only a few social categories. However, inequalities associated with social backgrounds – such as a lack of financial safety net – made the interviewees vulnerable in the world of academia, where constant competition for research money is often coupled, especially among younger interviewees, with unstable employment. In the most radical cases, they resulted in the need to see a professional therapist. This is how Estera, born in the late 1980s, reacted to a professional challenge encountered during her Ph.D. studies when she decided to find a temporary position abroad.

> I remember that in the evenings. I was just so hammered in the corner, and I was already gasping. I was howling so much, that 'what the fuck have I done,' 'why am I here' at all? [laughs] Why was I so stupid? They were so smart. In Poland, I already had some position, someone already knew that I knew something, and here I was, such a fool… That is 'Hello! A child from the province jumps to the next level, right? (Estera, FI).

Although it can be argued that such deep career uncertainty is not exclusive to popular class academics (because the first longer stay abroad is usually a stressful situation), their experience is unique for two reasons. First, middle-class academics did not usually have reasons to feel out of place because they had role models and were, in general, more accustomed to a dominating peer group from early childhood (Streib 2011). Secondly, popular-class background sharpens the material problems stemming from poor working conditions in neoliberal academia – treating the university as an enterprise and thus denying its special status – which is especially visible in the peripheral academia where the academic employees are overworked and underpaid (Luczaj 2022). Teresa makes it clear that her salary does not allow her to have a middle-class lifestyle, and the 15 year older Agnieszka contrasts her erstwhile unstable situation with the safe location of her son, who could afford, mentally and economically, to take a gap year

> The middle class, well, has been defined financially quite recently in Poland, right?[5] Just recently, a few months ago. And I don't think I fit in there. I think I don't meet the financial criteria because it's [been defined] with these tax reforms (Teresa, SI).
> When my son allowed himself a gap year, so to speak, to repeat his first year of university, it sort of amazed me that he just gave himself such an opportunity to choose. In the sense of "I'll see. If I don't like it, I will lose a year, but I will then try somewhere else". In such circumstances, it always seemed to me that you always had to go forward, that is, once I have chosen, well, I would go, I would continue, right? (Agnieszka, SI).

The unstable financial situation which Teresa explicitly refers to and Agnieszka merely alludes is clearly visible in Estera's case, who emphasized that her deep uncertainty was associated not only with a general sense of not fitting in academia but also a particular career event – a research grant she received. She was not sure if she would manage to achieve adequate results to settle the grant. Failure to do so might have resulted in an unprecedented debt she would be unable to pay off.

---

[5] Teresa refers to the tax relief for the "middle classes" introduced in 2021. This was the first reference to the social class in the Polish public sphere for decades (see: Chapter 1), besides media narratives stating that, the vaguely defined, middle class is in danger.

> I sat down, and [sighs] I got stuffy, and I thought, 'My dear God.' And here is this vision of hunger and poverty struck me. This family heirloom is like… Well, there you go! You just took a loan from the National Centre for Research and Development for your intellectual effort. I treated it as a loan, right? For me, it was a loan. They gave me money, but they want me to repay it, right? And the child will not repay the loan because she would not conclude research on time, right? And I would have to give back 100,000 PLN. When I saw that 100,000, I just didn't sleep for three nights, right? Seriously, I didn't know what to do with myself, right? (Estera, FI).

These voices correspond with a broader debate, showing that precarious academic careers (Megoran and Mason 2020) are more acceptable for the rich, who can count on family support. Deep career uncertainty, coupled with the risk one has to pay off, may also stem from the erosion of the prestige of social mobility through academia. Becoming a university professor traditionally used to be the synonym for upward mobility. For Bourdieu academic path was the apex of legitimate culture, a trajectory so glorious that the religious metaphors of "oblates" fit perfectly to describe it (Bourdieu 2003). This traditional approach was visible in the analyzed narratives, e.g. when Janek confesses that he "fulfilled the dreams he never had" due to his class position. In the excerpt from the interview with Oliwia below, we can sense the same tendency, although, during the interview, she revealed some doubts and showed signs of disenchantment with academia.

> It seems to me that… I mean, my conviction in the past was, until I did start working at the university, that this is something that is even unattainable, that it is done only by people who were simply, well, perfect in it (…). On the other hand, when I started working, this profession also began to slowly become disenchanted, so to speak, so these are also people who are imperfect [laughs]. So it is also not so distant, right? My perspective has already become completely different, while, well, my parents, even if they live under the same roof with someone who works at the university, still seem to believe that this is, after all, a different reality, right? So that I think this is how it looks from their perspective (Oliwia, SI)

Having similar doubts, Bronia, like many other interviewees, emphasized that her children do not have to go to college and perversely added that they could work as carpenters. Anastazja and Mikołaj offer a more general narrative of wishing their children to be happy, no matter what, and not necessarily in academia.

> Now, I would like my child to be happy, and I don't define her happiness by the fact that she has to finish some super college. I make sure that she goes [to school]… I mean, a safe school is the one she feels safe in and develops intellectually so that she is assured of the development, she is not afraid. But whether she finishes these

> studies or not, whether she will go backpacking to the end of the world… the most important thing is that she is happy (Anastazja, SI).
> I don't represent the type 'now we advanced, so this child must betortured.' No. He is supposed to have one passion that he will enjoy. Certainly, oh, and what I would like him to do is to speak good English. That will certainly make it easier for him nowadays, when people are migrating so much, moving around. It will certainly make it easier for him with this language (Mikołaj, SI).

Mikołaj's comment implying that he was not a typical aspiring class-mobile academic is in stark contrast with the narrative about the "appetite for upward mobility" (Chapter 1) present in some popular-class families. The interviewees do not have to aspire as much as their parents do but have a few skills and attitudes they want to instill in their kids (e.g. the so-much-needed transnational capital).

The most convincing justification for the occurrence of deep career uncertainty and erosion of academic job prestige was offered by Tamara, who pointed out the devaluation of diplomas or the devaluation of stakes in the academic field.

> Today we are seeing that hyper-accessibility causes an overproduction of people with degrees that mean nothing, and just like we have an overproduction of PhDs, maybe that's why it seems to me that anyone can have a Ph.D. and it's nothing, right? (Tamara, SI).

Later in this chapter, we will see that Tamara looks at the career of her younger popular-class brother with ambiguity, a mix of preeminence and envy. This attitude is understandable when we take into account another conviction shared by most of our interviewees, and highly likely also by the dominant-class academics – a sense of economic unfairness. As Ewa puts it:

> It seems to me that a teacher, whether regular or academic, does not enjoy much prestige. Sort of. I guess I'm saying it because of finances. I have this impression. At least in my social circles, it's best to have your own company, well, because you earn [good money], and then it's when you're in charge, and so on (Ewa, SI).

Ewa's comment should be placed in the context of the double-edged sword of the egalitarianism of the Polish HE system (see: Chapter 2), which offers broadened participation at the cost of low faculty salaries and new social circles, which have little to do with the intelligentsia, as among her friends "someone runs a bakery, someone is a policeperson or works in a factory." Seen from a more general perspective, these doubts depreciate, at least to some extent, the stakes of the entire academic game. Thus, this raises a timely question that did not fit into Bourdieusian theory: is the academic profession an indisputable path of upward mobility? In our pool of interviews, the predominant opinion was still a traditional Bourdieusian

"yes," and Ewa could serve as one of the outliers. Usually, academic work was perceived as upward mobility. It is, however, unknown if it will be the case for the children of academics born in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Losing Old Heritage (Cultural Breach)

Our interviews reveal that the experience of upward mobility can be painful not only due to incompatibility with the new culture but because of losing the old culture as well. Crossing social classes involves a cultural breach, making possible the transition from one social world to another. As seen from this perspective, upward mobility may be compared to migration and integration into a new culture. Even if one can consider himself or herself to be *a working-class academic* in the Marxian sense (which did not occur in our interviews) based on criteria such as not having many assets and making a living based on contract work (see: Bauman 1982) as opposed to *an academic with working-class background* (what many interviewees did), the lifestyle decisions forced or fostered by the new environment result in a deep identity metamorphosis. As Sennett and Cobb (1972/1993: 117) noted years ago, upward mobility "is a matter of believing in the old values, but having left them behind in search of freedom."

Class-mobile academics, especially at the beginning of their journey across classes, often adapted various assimilation strategies, e.g. the chameleon (Daenekindt and Roose 2013), who switches languages and cultural expressions according to the context in which is currently operating, or "language play" as Cezary succinctly put it. This term fits other narratives too.

> In college, I had this tendency to hide [my background]. Maybe not to hide, but, you know, that kind of chameleon effect, right? I just didn't necessarily say everything. But it was also probably only at the beginning (Tomek, SI).
> I switch. I adapt environmentally. I go somewhere, and I speak as they do. That is, I always adapt my habitus to the needs of the environment and… But I don't get tired. No, I don't get tired. This is for me… Here, it's different…
> **Such a natural ability, simply put?**
> Yes, oh, to adapt to people, to the environment, to the conditions. I never have any problems with this, and I don't see that one is better, one is worse (Mikołaj, SI).

Even if the willingness to hide someone's background was context-dependent and occurred only at certain moments, code-switching, the split between a performing self and an actual one (Sackrey and Ryan 1996), or other chameleon-like patterns made some interviewees feel culturally homeless (Friedman 2016). Stanisław, the son of an electrician and a seamstress, believed it was unavoidable.

> The natural consequence of upward mobility is that one is always an outsider. One leaves one herd, enters another, and one is no more in those inner, most protected circles of either of these herds (Stanisław, SI).

These deep lifestyle changes, analyzed in detail in Chapter 4, made the interviewees frame their careers as "a journey", which enabled "progress" (Aneta). Similarly to migrants, upwardly mobile individuals follow the "paths," pass crossing points ("bridges"), encounter barriers ("doors"), and can see a better life nearby ("windows"), to borrow just a few metaphors from border aesthetics (Schmianski and Nyman 2021). These metamorphoses triggered very different reactions in the family environment and in academic circles. Colleagues and spouses of our interviewees, usually coming from the intelligentsia, often stressed that they admire the fact that upwardly mobile academics could make it up the social ladder.

> He is a person who underwent this kind of rare, I think, path, from those very regional [social] circles, totally non-intellectual, to those very sophisticated global games (Janek's colleague).
>
> It's a matter of effort, just sort of crossing such barriers. (…) It requires crossing such psychological barriers. In my home, there were no barriers at all because it [having a college diploma] was something taken for granted (Sabina's colleague).
>
> Well, [I admire him for] the way he has worked on himself, [his] change of style, a complete change of style. Also, a complete change of some habits and behavior. I don't want to tell such things here – but generally, patting on the back is over. Some, such things that at the beginning troubled me a little, which were expressions of sympathy, but well, were a little bit out of place. Well, and these language issues, indeed. I'm sure now, well, that he represents the academic level in non-academic circles. And I'm also impressed by the fact that he manages to combine a really active fatherhood, very involved with two areas of activity: research and teaching at two universities (Mikołaj's colleague).

As we have seen, the upwardly mobile individuals were admired because they were class renegades (see: Chapter 2), i.e. they were ready for a cultural breach or the abandonment of certain activities related to social class. For instance, Janek never got his driver's license and disliked all kinds of tinkering because men in his family were doing both on a daily basis, either as a part of their work or off-duties. Similarly, Estera's mother, who also experienced upward mobility (although "shorter" than her daughter), had an aversion to sewing because she remembered her older sister, i.e. the aunt of Estera, being overworked, even on Christmas Eve, and had vividly unpleasant memories of fabrics scattered all over the place. Often these aversions relate to cultural choices (Chapter 4), which only deepen the breach of the upwardly mobile individuals with popular class culture.

On the other hand, being a renegade was often pointed out as an abandonment of one's roots. Observing reactions to mobility in the original social milieu, one can notice an unusual blend of pride and a sense of loss (see Chapter 4 to see how religious practices can be a bone of contention). This is visible, for instance, in Tomek's memory of his family's reaction to his new language customs or in an excerpt from Mikołaj's brother's interview, when he discusses the language habits of his family as compared with standard Polish.

> My family would also start saying: "Oh, a gentleman from the high society has come to us." (1s) Because I started to so to use speak, formal Polish, or such middle-class Polish language. And it was kind of a sting in the tail that "a gentleman just came from the city" (Tomek, FI).
> Well, especially when he came home, when he first came home, it [linguistic habits] irritated him a little, but after a longer stay, you already know that, well, it's hard… some things will not change, right?
> **And may I ask what he wanted to correct in the first place?**
> Well, vocabulary, right, some expressions. We speak differently, and the city dwellers differently. It is well known. If someone is longer in the city, then when he comes to the countryside, some things irritate him. Other word endings, because you know. "Bylim" ("we was"), "przynieślim" ("we bringed") and so on.
> **And they are very nice endings too. It's a beautiful speech.**
> Well, not everyone likes it. Generally, at school, they always force us to say "we were," "we brought" (Mikołaj's brother).

This example of language trouble explains why one of the most often cited examples of the negative consequences of upward mobility is losing the family of origin (Metzgar 2021).

Losing the old heritage is also strengthened by spatial mobility, which hinders, if not prevents, the intimate family contacts popular among the working classes (Gdula et al. 2014). The process of moving away from the family has two sides. Sometimes the one initiating the process is the upwardly mobile person who wants to loosen family ties, which we observed for example in the case of Stanisław. Alternatively, the interviewees, despite good general family relations like in Cezary's case, emphasize that they have a better relationship with the families of their partners than their family of origin. The similarities in cultural capital make it possible to form and ground these new relations, while dissimilarities force the negotiations of the relations with the family of origin.

Sometimes the result is a micro prefigurative culture where relatives recognize the high cultural competencies of the upwardly mobile people (which, in turn, enables the reversed cultural transfer analyzed at the end of this chapter). The interviewed mothers often indicated that in the course of education, their children became an authority for them.

> If I don't know something, I ask her. She is such a whizz-kid for me, an omniscient person, so… [laughter]. She is a repository of knowledge on various subjects, this little daughter of mine (Sabina's mother).
> Often, I'm not trying to hide it, I also learn life from Teresa and my other daughter. Because they are living in a different space now. And I live in the countryside near Slupsk, and I'm a makeup artist, so I also have a different environment. I have contact with other people. Also, I am happy to learn about a lot of things anyway (Teresa's mother).

The recognition of this knowledge gap, or rather symbolic distance, needs to be seen from the intersectional lens, which suggests that the metamorphosis is much more difficult if the possessive and patronizing "pater familias," i.e. a father who "always knows better," was the central figure in the family (see: Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993; Kohn 1989).

> I had quite an overbearing father who always knew better. Consequently, regardless of whether I finished high school or college or I hold a doctorate in social sciences [laughs], he was still smarter about psychology than I was. So no, there was not much discussion about it. Well, they [parents] certainly were proud of me, but there didn't seem to be an opportunity to expose it in any special way (Agnieszka, FI).
> My father is a turbo leftist person but a person who, you know, spent his whole life in Radom, and I don't know when was the last time he was abroad. He hasn't met gay people, right? Nor refugees. He watches public television,[6] and somehow, you know, it confused his mind. I mean, he listens to what they say about these social groups, right? Because I know these people, and I live in Warsaw, and I see other people who… or I just know people who, for example, are Muslims, right? I kind of know that it's nothing terrible, right? That they're not terrorists, that you can't talk about them like that, and that it's just an ideological poison of public television, and so on, and so on. But yeah, well, there are endless arguments. There's still this kind of split in the house between me and my father, between my mother and father, too (Bronia, FI).

From the structural perspective, we can see that it is a set of traditional, restrictive gender norms in popular-class families, which makes relations with upwardly mobile children more difficult. More importantly, however, even when interpersonal relations were good or very good (as in Cezary or Sabina's case), there were often few common topics for discussion. Not to mention that very often, relatives were unable to understand the rules of the academic field within which the interviewees began to function, as we have already seen. One of the moments when socio-professional differences become apparent and cultural breach becomes evident is the defense of a Ph.D. thesis. First, many upwardly mobile academics

---

[6] Under influence of the right-wing government.

decided not to invite their families a Ph.D. defense exam, which is a common practice in Poland to allow relatives to watch this important rite of passage. One possible reason for that is class shame resulting in the unwillingness to introduce parents to teachers (Grimes and Morris 1997: 54–55).

> It wasn't easy for me. My parents hadn't even been to the Ph.D. defense because they were ashamed to come. For me, it was… In fact, at the time, I still thought: "Thank God" (Tomek, SI).
> For me, it was something completely unthinkable. Eee so yy, no. Parents were not present (Stanisław, FI).

Second, the analysis of the narratives about Ph.D. defense exams of those, who decided to invite their parents, suggests that the underlying reason was not necessarily shame, but rather a sense of inadequacy or estrangement analyzed earlier in this chapter. Let us consider, in detail, the two Ph.D. defense exams by Estera and Cezary.

> It was probably the best day of my entire educational career in general because I invited… Even my aunt, who had no idea what it was about. My parents, friends from Opatówek, just many family members, right? Many friends, just a lot of people, came for this defense [laughs]. Oh yes, so bizarre people, who, you know, sat there, listened, understood nothing. (…) It took an awfully long time. It was terribly tiring. ((2)) Well, but it worked out, right? And then everyone got wonderfully drunk (Estera, FI).
> [His parents] were so proud. So proud and a little bit, kind of embarrassed because they were kind of out of place in the environment. (…) I remember one of my beloved professors asked Cezary a question, and Cezary made a sudden pause. Well, so this beloved professor of mine started to elaborate, and it looked a little bit like he was trying to put Cezary in a difficult position. (…) Well, but knowing both Cezary and this professor, I knew it was going to end well, anyway. But this context was known, I think to everyone who sat there but not to Cezary's dad. Cezary's dad looked as if he was going to punch that stupid professor if he asked Cezary something one more time (Cezary's colleague).

In both excerpts, we clearly see that the occurrence of Others in the academic lecture room resulted in confusion stemming from different definitions of situations possessed by different agents. Estera self-orientalizes herself by talking about "bizarre people" who have arrived at her Ph.D. defense exam and stresses the alcoholic celebration of this event. Even though – in the course of the interview – she admitted that she did not understand the discussion during her brother's defense (in another discipline), she strongly pointed out the knowledge gap and the lack of understanding of academic culture. Although a Ph.D. defense is a highly complex ritual hardly understandable outside academia, the distance

between popular-class people and middle-class people is – in this respect – far greater than the distance between the dominant and dominated faction of middle-class (i.e. even if unfamiliar with academic rituals, the parents in professional positions could apply rules known form the business, legal, or medical world, or use their university student experience). This is probably why Cezary's colleague felt obliged to stress that his parents, unaware of the rituals and norms, behaved in a clearly non-standard way. Although nothing serious happened, the social distance could be felt in the air.

Popular Class Background as an Academic Asset

Up to this point, I discussed how social heritage translates into variegated forms of social suffering – in the old or new social milieu. This is, however, only a part of the story, as in some cases, the in-the-middle position, or the habitus clivé (Friedman 2016), can be advantageous in both social worlds. As seen from the new culture's perspective: the introduction of a new set of dispositions into the academic world can result in a positive change. A clear class-related example comes from the interview with Bronia's colleague:

> Certainly, she has always been a person who can talk to people from different social classes, different professions, and so on, and can befriend them. She doesn't have that kind of distinction in herself (Bronia's colleague).

In a similar manner, Aneta, a social scientist, auto-diagnoses herself and asserts that her background may be an advantage.

> I understand society quite well and the various processes that take place in it precisely because I am such a, I don't know… There is also such a category as a "frontier man." It may not quite fit, but I have gone through a certain journey between social classes, between the drawers in which people are categorized, and that… Well, it gives me such a kind of broader vision (Aneta, SI).

This attitude of Bronia or Aneta is similar to interculturality acquired along with the increase of transnational capital. Using the terminology grounded in working-class studies, we can refer to it as "navigational capital" or the skills of maneuvering through social institutions (Crew 2020). A meticulous analysis of how the upwardly mobile narrate their roles in an academic environment also reveals the wisdom stemming from their difficult childhood, which required them to rapidly accommodate to new circumstances and allowed them to become better (i.e. more knowledgeable and scrupulous) teachers and researchers. This conviction points out to an positive impact of structural factors on

individual merit. Some discovered a specific "working class-pedagogy" – or mentoring practices and teaching styles – in themselves (which is an example of the beneficial impact of the individual on the institution) or pointed to the rebellious dispositions resulting from "the hysteresis of the habitus" (Bourdieu 2003: 157). These individual dispositions are capable of triggering a broader systemic change. These positive aspects of popular-class background have been discussed separately elsewhere (Luczaj 2022). Let us focus here on just one meaningful example, where the limited resources available in someone's childhood, useful primarily in everyday life, could – quite unexpectedly – have resulted in dispositions indirectly facilitating academic success. In an excerpt quoted earlier in this chapter, Estera admitted that she could make up for her deficits by showing her organizational and science management skills. Bronia's colleague spoke, in turn, about her thriftiness.

> She was also able to save a lot, so as soon as she was getting scholarships – she was able to get them, and she was able not to spend them. This is such an interesting case. I don't know another person like that, who is poor and at the same time always has a lot of money in her account. So she doesn't have any kind of support, like I, for example, now have. I can rely on my family if something happens, but she was able to somehow manage these small funds, and they were always there. There was enough, and there was always even some extra (Bronia's colleague).

The examples cited in this section prove that new dispositions in the field, although difficult to be reconciled with academic doxa, can bring new qualities to academia. In the remainder of the paper, we will focus on how upward mobility can positively impact the old social milieu, despite the cultural clashes we have analyzed so far.

Valuing the Culture of Origin

Apart from shame or a chameleon-like attitude, one of the common reactions to the incompatibility of statuses was the willingness to appreciate the culture of origin or re-discovering its value. While this trend has long been reported in the UK where the class divides are stronger (Domański et al. 2021: 219), it is worth analyzing it in Poland where many members of the society deny the very existence of social classes, and which, in turn, makes it harder to appreciate class cultures. Or, where it is more difficult to manifest a strong working-class identity like e.g. Robert, one of the informants in Sennett and Cobb's book (1972/1993: 232) who had never left the working-class Cabrini estate, which was a clear demonstration of class affinity.

As seen from this perspective, it is worth emphasizing, however, that our interviewees suggested that upward mobility does not necessarily mean automatic acceptance of the new, "better" world at the expense of the old, as Bourdieu would have put it. Some interviewees explicitly declared local patriotism and attachment to the culture of origin, which is a symptom of Freire's (1970) conscientization.

> I feel like I have such a sense of loyalty that when they start saying something insulting about the countryside, then I get involved. I'm constantly checking what's going on in my village. So it's that kind of local attachment (Helena, second interview).

In Helena's case, as we saw, her mixed identity translated into action – in the form of protests against "offending the countryside" (*nadawanie na wieś*), which is confirmed by the words of her colleague.

> She has a close bond with this place of her childhood. Anyway, when we were at a conference, we also visited that place of hers where she used to live, where she went to school. So yes, she absolutely doesn't forget it, absolutely, and she also doesn't disavow it. She doesn't hide it. On the contrary, she shows that it is a very important place in her life and a very valuable one. And she refers to this place with very high respect (Helena's colleague).

Also, Mikołaj, as seen by his middle-class colleague, has a strong relationship with the social milieu of origin. Despite the social differences between him and his family, it is important for Mikołaj to maintain this relationship.

> He wants to support them. He talks with them a lot and visits them, and thinks about them. It is also so very nice in his character that he is interested in his parents, that all the time he tries to keep in touch, anyway, he goes there (Mikołaj's colleague).

Similarly, Aneta uses her supply of cultural capital to defend cultural omnivorousness, including, e.g. the "shameful" lowbrow music genres (see: Snibbe and Markus 2005). Like Helena, she displays a "loyalist" (Hurst 2010) attitude by cherishing some elements of the old culture. Unlike the American loyalists, both narrators are, however, rather devoid of their working-class identity. Helena and Aneta, more than anything else, fit the description of "double agents" when they try to stress the bright sides of the environment they came from, although they do not feel like "two people" (Lubrano 2005: 227).

> My colleagues who have such a typically intellectual background get very indignant at the fact, for example, that people can watch some silly soap operas on TV. Or listen to disco polo.[7] Or to engage in, or take pleasure in any other kind of entertainment considered 'plebeian.' Or when someone has given a child a name that is regarded as pretentious and associated with the margins of society. Well, then, I always get a little bit… We start arguing. I sort of try to… You could say that I then try to take the side a little bit of these cultural practices, these tastes, these habits, these ways of life, which are so terribly ridiculed by people from the middle class, the intellectual circles. I try to show that each of us has the right to have different cultural practices. If something bothers you a lot, we live in a free world where you don't have to listen to it or don't watch it but allow others to do so (Aneta, SI).

When we analyze in detail the narratives about the families of origin, even in the cases of those who were largely critical of their family environments (e.g. when marked by alcoholism and violence), there were "class appreciation moments" despite the main line of argumentation. Let us have a look at two excerpts.

> This morning I met with my brother, who has just changed jobs again. He is working again at the SuperMedia warehouse, and he is delighted because they have a new warehouse. It is warm in there. He goes to work for a fixed time, comes home, and can relax after this satisfying, effective work. He doesn't have to do anything at night. He doesn't have to do anything on vacation. He doesn't have to worry about whether he'll be intellectually capable of some task or not.
> **Are you saying this in contrast to yourself?**
> To this job in academia which looks like this: it requires a great deal of sacrifice and simply stress, and it is very risky for self-esteem because you are being constantly judged. Working in a warehouse or such physical work in general (…) also seems to me to be less risky from such a psychological point of view, for a person, after all. And here, there are a lot of risks (Tamara, SI).
> He [father] carries and sets up equipment (…) I mean… it's not demanding, but well, you have to be able to do it. Yeah, and sort of… Well anyway, try, I don't know, carry a refrigerator up to the second floor, having never done it before (Cezary, SI).

At the same time – what is certainly an advantage of the working-class background – the interviewees were far-sighted, i.e. in their spontaneous sociologies, they took into account "a large portion of the total social structure in order to understand what is happening" (Levy 1991: 15). For instance, they argued that working-class people have different sets of skills. From this excerpt, we can learn that what Cezary's father is lacking is not so much cultural capital (because he did possess a different form of it) but symbolic capital or the

[7] Aneta refers to a uniquely Polish lowbrow music genre (see: Chapter 4).

legitimization of his skills. In this respect, working-class academics are highly unlikely to go into the intelligentsia trap, or information bubble, as they truly appreciate different lifestyles and cultures, unlike the middle-class culture, which forces "unintended homogeneity" (Metzgar 2021: 125). To start appreciating the environment in which they grew up, some of our interlocutors had to work through their initial shame (Luczaj 2022), or at least some aspects of it. The meticulous analysis of Cezary's interview allows us to observe that he referred to his father in a few distinctive and meaningful ways. Apart from "dad" ("tata"), which occurs only incidentally, his father is referred to as either "Łukasz" or "my old man" ("mój stary") and simply "father." While the latter is clearly a descriptive term, "Łukasz" and "my old man" both had obviously negative connotations. This illustrates the multiple understandings of the father's role, which functioned in Cezary's narrative, and suggests that his habitus is indeed clivé: having acknowledged what was wrong in his family of origin in the process of becoming an intellectual, he still maintained close contact with them and tried to symbolically defend his father.

Another form of appreciation for parents comes from the narratives regarding spare time. Although the work-life balance was, for most of the interviewees, an unattainable ideal, they tried to save at least some time for leisure. This was one of the rare occasions when they enviously looked at their family practices.

> And in fact, I honestly believe that one should work from hour to hour and then goodbye. These are the things that I just miss. I am responsible for some things. I have to make these decisions. This independence is nice, but it still requires something from us. Well, and just the fact that you are always at work. Well, if you're a welder, you're not always at work, right? (Nina, SI).
>
> Until "Teleexpress,"[8] you would deal with various things, then you were already sitting on the couch. I, for example, when I'm very tired, and lately I've been very tired, I – almost with tears in my eyes – I recall those afternoons and that couch where everyone sat. Nothing important or valuable was going on there. There was just that TV, but still, it was a leisure time that we don't really, or principally, experience now. And I wish it were different (Teresa, SI).
>
> I mean, I wouldn't want to live like my parents, although sometimes I envy them that garden and peace and quiet, and that kind of predictable life because ours is less predictable (Anastazja, SI).
>
> I am becoming closer to certain cultural practices of my parents, which I thought were strange, like: 'Why do we spend a whole year… Or half a year slogging over these homegrown cucumbers and then still packing them in jars, swamping half the kitchen with it, when, after all, everything can be bought in the store?'. Today, I catch myself making jars of preserves (Aneta, SI).

[8] News flash program broadcast at 5 p.m.

These excerpts lead us to what can be referred to as "rediscovering the roots" or reconciling with them (Luczaj 2022). As we have already seen, there were moments when the interviewees started noticing, from their new vantage points, that their old life had its advantages and was a kind of a "paradise lost."

> My parents, because they come from the countryside, could enjoy such a really healthy, I mean, healthy, even if poor, but simple food, in that simple sense. Well, in my mother's case, it's just the closed circuit of a small rural farm. It's something we don't understand and what we can't imagine: a year-round diet based on one piece of land, basically, and cows. My mother loves to prepare simple and good food (Estera, SI).
>
> Lately, I realized the fact that I actually spend my vacations the way they largely did, which is to go to this gardening plot for two months with children (Maria, SI).

By looking back on their biographies, these interviewees start to value the life they had before their mobility. The quality of that life was epitomized more in spare time, but also more healthy food, both recalled with nostalgia (Maria, Estera). Alternatively, it could be taking pride in the local dialect, arriving late in their life (for a more detailed analysis, see: Luczaj 2022). In this sense, upward mobility can be seen as a long way to appreciating these features of one's upbringing which otherwise might have been lost in the context of material and symbolic destitution.

Reversed Transfer and Repayment

Jules Naudet (2018), researching upward mobility in the Indian context, pointed out an interesting phenomenon of "paying back one's debt to society." As this finding was based on a culture barely comparable with the Polish one, during fieldwork, we looked closely if this category also applies to the post-socialist East European upward mobility. What was clearly visible was the practice of "reversed cultural transfer," e.g. a situation in which an educated child tried to educate their parents or was trying to find other ways to influence their parent's life. For instance, Estera, unlike her equally educated but less patient brother, always tried to explain to her parents the language habits she acquired and also offered them book suggestions.

> Estera, on the other hand, doesn't correct me. It's just that she uses a lot of words that we don't know, and I ask her how it is in our own [local] speech so that I could understand [laughs] (Estera's mother).

When Estera narrates other efforts, e.g. to make her mother practice yoga or read intellectually stimulating books, she refers to them as a "reversed transfer." It was an attempt to instill middle-class practices in popular-class people.

> I'm certainly different because I am educated, right? Well, this is a not-to-be-missed issue. And the level of complexity at which I am able to analyze reality. That's what makes me very, significantly different. And I know this, and sometimes (…) Sometimes I hoped that I was able to… I tried to educate them, to make them interested, and give them such readings. Talk to them about this or that. Readings in the sense of the broader culture. I tried this reversed transfer [emphasis added]. For example, I bought a book for my mother (…) To me, it seems that this is such a bit of a bible of female spirituality, right? In such a simple sense. And at the same time, it's an effort, it's an intellectual book, strongly intellectual, well, and I bought it, for example, to my mother, who, well, she was not able to read it, because…
> **Hasn't she tried?**
> She reads a lot of different things, right, but the funniest thing is that for years I tried to make my mother go to yoga, and she went there eventually, and now she goes regularly (Estera, SI).

Although, ultimately, some of Estera's attempts to bridge the gap between her mother and herself proved unsuccessful, she succeeded elsewhere. Estera, just like other interviewees who wanted to make this reversed transfer happen (or have influence over their parent's lifestyles, which I analyze in detail in Chapter 4), could achieve that relatively quickly. In the pool of interviews, we, however, found a situation corresponding with Naudet's descriptions of "repayment," which required a resource investment. This is certainly also a good example of a classed cultural practice, but for the sake of argument, we would have to anticipate events a little and discuss it now.

> And because my parents have traveled little, I… (…) I have such a mission that I try to… Maybe not every year, but every two or three years, I organize for my parents trips around Europe. Last year we were in Berlin. (…) Last summer, before the pandemic, we went to Copenhagen for a few days. These are such budget trips (…) Because for my parents, for a long, long time, travel was associated with something very luxurious, something that required a very large budget. I also want to show them that… For example, the fact that we are in the European Union, in the Schengen area, and we can move freely around the continent, is also valuable. It's nice to take advantage of this. So I sort of try to… I'll be honest – I also have this sense, this mission, this need. I don't know, maybe in a sense to compensate my parents for those years in which they didn't travel for various reasons. I also don't quite know if it was purely economic reasons, in the sense that there was no money. On the other hand, I know that, for example, my parents have a gardening plot, they put a lot of money into this plot, and maybe there was no longer enough money to travel. But, anyway, I try to take my parents to see Europe every, say, another year and show them the world a bit (Aneta, SI).

Similarly to Aneta, who – wanting to pay her parents back for the efforts of raising her, started organizing low-cost trips around Europe and introduced them to travel vlogs – Gosia started taking her parent to the theater, Mikołaj put

much effort into persuading his grandmother to be more active, Nina tried to make her parents' diet more healthy, and Tomek taught his parents how to use technology to make international calls for free. Although these kinds of transfers may be possible due to the generational difference, a reversed transfer, as practiced by Estera and Aneta, was understood by them as an antidote to the "survival guilt," a syndrome discussed in the context of social mobility by Valerie Walkerdine (1994) and Barbara Jensen (2014). As seen from the cultural perspective, it was yet another proof that upward mobility, if it hits fertile ground, can have positive consequences both for the class-mobile academics and their families.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I analyzed the mechanism behind upward mobility in the Polish academic field, from realizing one's class difference through experiencing various issues with adaptation to the new environment and problems, such as feeling like a disconnected outsider in the culture of origin to re-considering the relationships with the new and old culture. These analysis proves that upward mobility is a complicated phenomenon – the life metamorphoses of the interviewees required making changes in their identity and acculturation to conditions that were rapidly changing. Understood as a social process, mobility has both positive and negative effects on the relationships with the culture of origin and the new culture. Further research in this area should pay attention to the changes in the field, which are likely to happen in the next generations. Most notably, it remains unclear whether or not the academic profession, still cherished in the current state of the academic field, will remain the paramount form of upward mobility in an even more casualized and precarized academia of the future – from the perspective of the academic inheritors, class mobile academics, and their families.

Chapter 4

CULTURAL MARKERS OF UPWARD MOBILITY WITHIN ACADEMIA. EASTERN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Rare studies on social mobility through education invariably stress that this experience results in significant lifestyle changes (Bandeira de Melo et al. 2016: 966). Although those are signalized here and there, little attention has been put to the detailed analysis of how mobility is associated with cultural activities. In this chapter, the particular "social class markers" have been discussed in the context of popular class dispositions, i.e. generalized patterns of behavior, which shape these particular tastes, choices, or preferences.

This analysis is based on various cultural markers of social classes identified in Poland, although not in the context of upward mobility. Quantitative research suggests the existence of significant differences in food preferences (Domański et al. 2015) or music tastes (Domański et al. 2021) across classes. Qualitatively-oriented scholars, for instance, point to the "urban" practices of middle classes – their specific, non-practically oriented taste for cycling (Gdula and Sadura 2012) or "a preference to live in a" a gated community (Gąsior-Niemiec, Glasze, and Pütz 2009; Polanska 2010). On the contrary, the popular class prefer watching TV in a family or friendship circle at the cost of a very limited readership and rare visits to official institutions of culture (Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura 2014: 131). These studies allowed the students of class cultures to distinguish at least three broad sets of dispositions or more general patterns of behavior, "familiarity" (emphasis on the communal value of social life), "practicism" (orientation to meet needs in the simplest possible way), and "egalitarianism" of popular classes (dislike of social hierarchy) (Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura 2014). Yet, it is not entirely sure how these cultural practices and dispositions work in the situation of upward mobility. As compared to the existing studies, autobiographical narrative interviews allowed me to paint a broader picture of practices and place them in the proper context of the entire life transformation associated with upward mobility.

In this chapter, I look for the demi-regularities (Steinmetz 2004: 393–394), i.e. "partial event regularities" that indicate the occasional (but less than universal) mechanisms in particular social settings – in upwardly mobile faculty. I investigate the cultural patterns and their life transformations associated with upward mobility, according to Jack Metzgar's (2021: 101) understanding of culture,

which is "about the rules, not the way each and every individual actually thinks, feels, or acts but rather the kind of social guidelines or pressures predominant in the social world within which individuals live and make choices." What working-class studies purport is rather that we "live largely in different social worlds, with different kinds and degrees of social guidelines and cultural pressures" (Metzgar 2021: 101). The classed patterns discussed below are, thus, demi-regularities: the occurrence of a pattern does not mean that popular-class people *never* have a particular disposition or that middle-class people *always* have it. In this chapter, I try to analyze *in what social circumstances these practices and dispositions are born* (instead of simply listing them) and suggest *how they are related to class cultures and upward mobility.* The first part of the chapter discusses specific groups of cultural practices, and the analysis concludes with a discussion of more general dispositions.

Upward Mobility and Cultural Practices

When I re-analyzed the entire material (biographical interviews, repeated interviews, IDIs with families and colleagues), it occurred to me that social class is associated with at least eight saturated themes discussed below. They range from very general attitudes, such as religious beliefs or post-materialism visible in relation to clothing and material possessions, to mid-range rules, such as making time for leisure, and particular preferences, e.g., taste for seafood or particular alcohol. No matter big or small, these cultural patterns reveal mechanisms associated with upward mobility through academia. As suggested in Chapter 1, the patterns discussed below are by no means simple outcomes of the class position of an individual. Their analysis, however, allows us to discuss how social class intersects with other important social characteristics, such as age or gender.

TV Culture versus Book Culture

If the upwardly mobile academics were to point out just one difference between the popular-class culture and middle-class culture, it would certainly be a preferred mode of leisure *at home*. The main division was between the adherents of what we can refer to as "the book culture" and "the TV culture." The latter, as exemplified by the habit of watching TV, was the only *unambiguously negative* pattern remembered from home. As we have seen in Chapter 3, upwardly mobile individuals tried to speak well about their families, but yet the TV watching was condemned, criticized, or simply ridiculed.

> Well, first of all, what I would never like to follow is my father's tradition of sitting in front of the TV. And my mother sitting separately with a book in the other room. That's something I would never want to follow (Estera, SI).
> At their [parents'] house, the TV and traditional television rule all the time, and whatever is on that TV, the TV should be on as a kind of object, working, playing in the background. And I am very far from that (Aneta, SI).
> My grandfather was also the kind of guy who, you know, well, mostly sat in front of the TV and drank some beer and smoked fags. He had a passion for horse races. Or he didn't [really] place bets on horses because he was not a gambler. He just kept horse racing notebooks (Cezary, SI).

These excerpts point out that, in the eyes of upwardly mobile academics, watching TV was almost universally considered to be shameful. In their argumentation, the narrators emphasized that television offered low-quality materials and that watching itself was a passive and worthless activity. That is why, even if they had a TV set, they did not watch television but rather the content from streaming services, which is an obvious generational trend (Strangelove 2015). This attitude sharply contrasted with the parents, who admitted that TV was an important part of their lives. Estera's father revealed it, even when prompted about a seemingly unrelated topic, preferred aesthetics of a home. When presented with a bunch of photographs with different interiors, he stated without hesitation:

> For me, it's this, no. 10 [with a TV]. Well, I need [laughs] a TV (Estera's father).

Ewa's mother, in turn, when initially prompted about spare time, stressed her taste for active forms of leisure, but not long later, she admitted that this applied to outdoor activities and added that at home, she watches TV.

> **How do you like to spend your free time?**
> I mean, I like to spend my free time actively, but there is not always time to go out and go somewhere with someone. But as soon as I have the opportunity, I try to go out of the house.
> **So those walks?**
> Yes. But when I'm at home, mostly TV
> (Ewa's Mother)

Besides the generational change, one of the reasons for this discrepancy can be theorized as class-related. Hostile attitudes towards TV occurred in many narratives because they stemmed from the outsider status associated with a sense of inadequacy or not-fitting in (see: Chapter 3). This was extensively discussed by Aneta.

> We don't frequent the theater or go to the movies with the whole family. What my parents like most is [watching] evening series on TV, not Ibero-American literature, and so on and so forth. I also sort of didn't verbalize it so loudly, but, well, on an internal level, well, there was such a sense of inadequacy with the world I want to aspire to (Aneta, SI).

As opposed to passive TV-watching, reading was a legitimized practice that the interlocutors wanted very much to subscribe to as upwardly mobile, hence, aspiring academics. The shameful "TV culture" was contrasted with the cherished book culture, and in this sense, the dislike for television was not only a generational preference but again turned out to also be a matter of class. It seems that there are at least two reasons constituting this symbolic opposition so clearly visible in almost all the interviews. Reading was a model, highly valuable practice, at least at a declarative level, because Polish data suggest that although higher education is correlated with reading behaviors, still, one-fifth of those with university diplomas do not read even one book per year (Zasacka and Chymkowski 2022: 12). The interviewees were pleased to emphasize that their families had reading habits. Tamara stressed that there were always books in her home, and by doing so, she revealed that her family possessed what Bourdieu refers to as objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu 1999). Furthermore, the "reading" parents proudly narrated their practices even if it was "light reading" only.

> I like thrillers, foreign/ Norwegian, and Polish. Well, and sometimes I like to read some romance, but not such a Harlequin-type romance, but such a romance with a plot. I don't like historical books. My husband reads an awful lot of different historical books.
> **So you don't exchange books?**
> No. He takes various thrillers from me to make a change, for example, Mróz,[1] right? Well, he reads a lot of different books, which I would not get through.
> **And Tamara? The same books, or does she read different ones?**
> Different, different. She reads very different books, the kind that I don't read – [at least] not all of them. She's more like her father.
> **So some historical ones too…**
> Such too, but well, and such different new arrivals, right? She also brings them to her father, maybe they will interest him, and I do not even take these books because I know that they will not… Maybe if a person had a lot of time (Tamara's Mother).

Conversely, the lack of participation in book culture enabled the interviewees to build a symbolic boundary between themselves and some family members. Sticking to Tamara's example, it is easy to distinguish the pride in having

[1] Remigiusz Mróz – a popular contemporary Polish author.

"reading" parents and the disdain for her younger brother, who "doesn't have a single book." This moral boundary seems to be aspirational, and as such closely associated with upward mobility. Another example of an aspirational attitude appears in a passage when Cezary is trying to show that his brother, despite the lack of institutionalized cultural capital, has well-developed social skills, what he refers to as "social intuition."

> [My little brother] had more potential than me for such different things. So athletically, for example, but also intellectually… You know, he, for example, is… he doesn't read any books, you know, more difficult books, etc. But when you talk to him, he, you know, he… in general, he has good such social intuition (Cezary, SI).

Although, unlike Tamara, Cezary is very proud of his brother, non-reading is perceived as a clear stigma. In other interviews, the disapproval of non-reading appeared as a form of blaming parents. This is why Andrzej sarcastically emphasized that in the eyes of his parents, "when he was reading, he was doing nothing." In the second interview, he ironically added that the only books read in his home were cookbooks or phonebooks (and yet, not very often). Zofia, in turn, bitterly recalls the times when her parents did not allow her to buy books, and her reading practices were supported only by an aunt.

Furthermore, boundary-making was associated with a particular form of upward mobility that we studied and, as such, is a class issue. Early reading ability and a general taste for books were helpful in further academic career (Grimes and Morris 1997). The Polish class-mobile academics declared that reading was a practice available for free and helped them build their future academic careers. Many studies show the other side of this phenomenon: that engaging in activities "unlikely to generate *valuable* capitals," such as shopping, clubbing, or playing Xbox, would not be deemed worthwhile by middle-class students (Bathmaker, Ingram, and Waller 2013: 734), as opposed to popular-class students, and as such, would not facilitate their way to the professoriate. This is why the topic of reading, understood as a foretaste of the intellectual world, was so relevant in the interviews.

> And I started to consume these books (…). On the one hand, my parents couldn't tell me not to read because I didn't drink alcohol. I didn't smoke. I just wanted to read. It's a bit silly to prohibit it, right? It was a bit… My parents started to use it [reading] in such a way 'you can read once you've helped on the farm.' So even reading was on such condition that, um, I did not have free time to study or read. After coming back from school, the first activity was to help on the farm. (…) I remember that my greatest joy was when it was raining [laughs] and then I could just read … yeah, I had such a.. kind of my room, er, on the first floor. And I could just simply read there. Madness (Tomek, FI).

This fragment clearly shows that in many biographies, books were not merely physical objects but meaningful members of social networks, Latour's actants (Latour 2017; see: Luczaj, Dolińska and Kurek-Ochmańska, in press).

In this section, we could observe how cultural practices enforced class divides. Reading turned out to be both a symbolic asset (fostering a sense of belonging) and an objective advantage (in terms of career chances). Treating TV watching as an objectively and universally low cultural repertoire is a marker of the intelligentsia's habitus, which is inclined to reject non-intellectual practices[2].

Ideological Sphere

The literature on upward mobility (see: Chapter 1) points out that one of the most important metamorphoses of upwardly mobile individuals is associated with political stances (see: Sennett and Cobb 1972/1993: 112). To cite only one striking result, Grimes and Morris (1997: 155), while analyzing the political views of popular-class sociologists, discovered that none in their sample had conservative views. Similarly, in Poland, it is highly likely that upwardly mobile academics adopt liberal or leftist views, even if they come from conservative families. This metamorphosis usually makes them talk about politics with their families and try to explain their views. The radical discrepancy of political views usually led to disputes, which was visible in Cezary's brother's account listing controversial topics, and the recollections of Tamara's and Teresa's mothers, who were accused of being racist or intolerant.

> You know what, we don't agree on everything for sure, it seems to me. But [when] we see each other, we also talk about things we want to talk about, right? I often have doubts about certain things, and I also know that Cezary is a very intelligent person, and I try to ask him too, because I don't fully understand certain things either, because I don't delve into certain topics, and I know that Cezary, let's say, has more time for such things. For example, I don't know, we could argue when it comes to refugees, I don't know, the death penalty maybe, but also here he would quickly explain it to me and convince me (Cezary's brother).
>
> **Meaning what, Tamara corrected you?**
>
> Yes, yes. "Murzynek Bambo"[3] such a rhyme must not be repeated, right?

---

[2] Interestingly, the interviewees were not as much critical about social media even if the informational content available there is often created by people without institutionalized cultural capital (Molęda-Zdziech 2013, Łuczaj and Drążczyk 2023).

[3] "Murzynek Bambo" (Bambo the black child) is a popular children's poem written by Julian Tuwim in 1934. See more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murzynek_Bambo

And what do you feel when Tamara, for example…
Nothing, it's ridiculous.
It's ridiculous. Because there are different reactions.
It's ridiculous.
OK, ridiculous.
It makes me laugh. I say, 'fair enough', I say, but I was taught this rhyme. And once Jacuś[4] looked like this – when she got him a new haircut. He has so black hair, and he is dark. Very dark, and I say, 'he looks like *murzynek*.' "You shouldn't say murzynek" [– she says]. "We do say it, we do" (Tamara's Mother).
Teresa sometimes accuses me of anti-Semitism, which is not true. Because you, young people, also look differently at certain things. And we have argued more than once on this subject because I do not agree that I am anti-Semitic. And she doesn't like my language. Well, for example, if I said in the context of such slyness that you 'act like an old Jew.' These are things that I might have taken from my parents, or grandparents, or from my environment, and that's what is unintentionally said because I don't think like that at all. Because it's kind of, I don't know, a phrase. And nowadays…
There is a different sensibility.
A different sensibility, it's like with this Murzynek Bambo. For example, I heard that it is now, for example, tactless to call a cake a "The Black Child" ("Murzynek"). But it's a symbol of today's world. That's how it is, and we sometimes argue about these things (Teresa's mother).

It's worth emphasizing that the interview scenario did not contain direct questions about religion or politics, but these questions appeared anyway when the interviewees were prompted about their families. As such, they appear to be of crucial importance. Even if the source of these disagreements may be generational (which explains why a children's rhyme becomes a highly controversial topic), we should note that it is likely that in academia, we observe stricter adherence to political correctness compared with popular classes (Scott 2016; Deresiewicz 2017). This tendency was visible, especially if someone's field of expertise was social sciences or humanities. For those who become different from their families, the discrepancy between the traditional worldview of the family members and a strong set of progressive beliefs widespread in the new social circles of upwardly mobile academics led to multiple disagreements. These often arose in relation to childrearing behavior or romantic relationships.

Do you have such moments that you think to yourself – I don't recognize my child when I look at Tamara?
I do, I do (…) I mean, well, she has a lot of such views, which I didn't know she had, well…

[4] Tamara's son (a Caucasian child).

For example?
Well, for example, now, for some time, it's been LGBT and so on. So when she starts to natter to me that if Jacuś was gay, she would be ok with that, I say, 'well, you don't have to tell him that he can be gay. Why do you tell him that?' Well, 'to let him know that if he wants to, he can be gay' [she replies]. I say – 'well, you are already weirdos, well then maybe dress him up in dresses right away and raise him like that.' Well, I understand that they are born like that. And she says – 'mommy,' I say – 'child,' I have nothing against these people. I understand these people that they are born with something there in their brain and have such a predisposition, and so they live, let them live, it does not bother me, but I would not want my child…'. It's the same when someone has a disabled child and accepts it' (Tamara's mother).
I remember when she had an Indian boyfriend. She knew it was not an option to talk about him at all.
At all?
Yes, she was already an adult, so she didn't particularly have the need or necessity… In any case, she didn't tell and…
The parents didn't know?
They didn't know. All such cultural and social issues concerning… I don't know, LGBT people or feminism certainly caused some… especially from her father's side (Bronia's colleague).

Although a more liberal worldview can stem from many life events, such as relocation to a big city or a generational trend (e.g. leaving Catholicism, or switching to a vegan diet), the academic environment favors such a worldview. If the contrast between the views held in the family and the beliefs of progressive academics is too big (due to the radicalized political opinions), it can result in the latter being accused of fanaticism. Tamara's colleagues, just like Estera's brother (also an academic but with core experience in life sciences), felt as if our interviewees not only had very clear and progressive worldviews but also tried to impose their opinions on others.

For example, Estera is a very keen environmentalist, and, sort of, her opinions on the subject are very, very strong. She's a bit fanatic (Estera's brother)
So yes, sometimes I feel terrorized in her presence, but I've gotten used to her style of being, and it's not a problem for me. But I think someone who doesn't know her could feel a little touched or attacked. 'How dare she eat meat' (Tamara's colleague).

Although ideological disagreements happen in all social classes, the contrast between rather traditional popular classes in Poland and rather liberal academic circles made these contrasts sharper. An example of a symptomatic, controversial, ideological issue was the dispute between people taking pro- and anti-vaccination stances in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This theme was associated with the project's timeline, which started in the first

summer of COVID in 2020, but also illustrates a broader problem of social legitimization of science. Below, Cezary expresses unambiguous support for vaccinations, and by doing so, he differentiates himself from the family of his brother, which is proof that ideological changes, although they may be seen as generational, are closely related to class cultures. Similarly, Urszula is deeply concerned by her brother's family's attitude toward medical treatment. In both cases, it was education, which constituted a sharp contrast between siblings, and was a variable explaining the variation of stances regarding COVID-19 vaccines in the quantitative research (ARC 2021).

> Baśka did not vaccinate Hanka. Simply it has not crossed her mind that, well, it has to be done. They had a problem with admission to kindergarten because of this (…) I have absolutely no anti-medical sort of ideas, so I think it's a scandal and totally absurd that she didn't do it (Cezary, SI).
>
> And then a terrible thing happened because it turned out that she [sister-in-law] doesn't vaccinate the child and doesn't give medicine to him. Because she doesn't believe in medicines. And Tolek got sick . . . with streptococcus. He got infected with streptococcus. For a week, he was sick at home. After a week, she called a doctor, who came to the house. The doctor prescribed antibiotics and said, 'You need to go with the baby to the hospital right away. And stop by the pharmacy on your way, and give him antibiotics. Don't wait'. And she did not give him those antibiotics, you know, did not buy them, and Tolek got sepsis. (2s) Well, and at the last minute… Doctors said that an hour later he would have died, and she took him to the hospital by cab (Urszula, FI).

The pro-vaccination attitudes are part of the legitimized culture, as the trust in them was nearly universal among the members of the intelligentsia, and especially within the academe, not to mention the trust in standard medical procedures. This is why the upwardly mobile interviewees were so open to discussing their views in this regard. They expressed standard beliefs in their social circles, which were sanctioned by the authority of science in the broader society. They knew that they were in the mainstream, and as such, just as the middle classes discussed in Bourdieu's *Distinction*, they displayed devotion and acceptance to these legitimized cultural patterns (Bourdieu 1984).

Apart from political views and beliefs, which were often the sources of various disagreements with families, another significant change associated with upward mobility was a religious transformation. Following the generational trend, but also as a result of the contact with critical ideologies, many interviewees, despite having been raised in traditional Catholic homes, became atheists or agnostics. The discussion of fragments of their life stories was one of these moments when the upwardly mobile academics spoke with the highest certainty about the mismatch between their new and old culture and not fitting in, in the family environment.

> My dad is very much involved in the church – just like all the ancestors in the history of this family, at least as far as I know. I have completely left the church, and from time to time, there is a moment when my dad… This is the only moment when my dad behaves violently towards me. To let me know that I should, after all, return to this path and do what everyone in the family does. So yes, so I think this is a huge difference (Stanisław, SI).
> And I have a problem with my siblings who think that you have to spend time in church, right? Because you know how it is. I say, 'no, it doesn't have to be like that,' right? 'It won't change anything [if you don't go to church]' and… 'at least don't be hypocrites, just say that you want your child to have First Communion' (…) So often, that's kind of the only point, I think, where they… I can feel the tension (Tomek, SI).

Stanisław and Tomek represented many interviewees who stressed that their views are different from their siblings' beliefs, and, by doing so, implicitly suggesting that generation is not the only factor responsible for these transitions. This divergence of views was painful for the parents, who as we already know, were usually traditional and conservative. The parents admit that they did all they could as parents to raise their children Catholic, but on the other hand, they usually reported an all-encompassing sense of failure.

> Certainly, she is a non-practicing person or a complete non-believer, but I believe that faith is a personal matter of each person, each soul. What I, as a mother, could have done, it seems to me that I did, perhaps since… Well, no, I do not reproach myself at all because, in the past, I reproached myself that I had made a mistake, that I apparently brought her up badly when it came to values (Sabina's mother).
> While it's not a problem, it's just a little bit sad that we gave them such a total foundation as far as Catholicism is concerned, and they left [the church], but I don't think that churchgoing is an indicator of believing in God, so they believe because Jasiek [Estera's brother] said that he believes in God, but he doesn't go to church (….) Estera definitely stopped going [to church] since, the more she was becoming a feminist, the more she was leaving the church, and then she stopped completely, because the church, she says so, I say so too, that the church deserves it that people leave (Estera's mother).
> I mean, I think she is now an atheist (…). She's, after these studies, well-read, and she's thoughtful. I think she's got it all figured out somehow, and she's certainly at the moment very critical of the Polish [Roman Catholic] church, for example (Teresa's mother).

Furthermore, even if an upwardly mobile academic was still a believer or a churchgoer (which not always went hand in hand), this person was highly likely to have some critical thoughts regarding the Roman Catholic faith and tradition. This trend was visible both among younger and older interviewees.

> I do not celebrate Christmas. I do not do Christmas Eve. It does not interest me at all. This does not mean that I am a non-believer. Because I am, this should be emphasized to understand the difference, right? I do not cultivate traditions, while, for example, my brother or sister love decorating Christmas trees (Zofia, SI).
> Janek, in my opinion, is a person of deep faith, while he absolutely does not want to identify with the Catholic Church (Janek's partner).

Zofia is another interviewee to show that her attitude to tradition is more than a mere generational difference. While her siblings, who did not experience a clear upward mobility, cultivated the customs known from childhood, she broke away from them. Although she never became an atheist, her transformation made her depart from certain rituals. Most interviewees, however, were moving away from the church and adopting progressive political views. The worldview transformations may be generational but acculturation to the liberal academic world seemed to accelerate these transformations. The traditional interest of this faction of the middle class, which in Polish reality is referred to as "the intelligentsia" in political and social matters, may explain why social scientists and humanists stressed various ideological mismatches more often than the interviewees specializing in hard sciences. These ideological divisions seem to be one of the clearest cultural reasons for the feeling of losing one's family in the course of an otherwise beneficial process of upward mobility (see: Chapter 2).

Rediscovering Leisure Time

Assessing both from the literature (see Chapter 1) and the opinions of our interviewees, in many popular-class families, there was little or no place for unproductive leisure. The common day was divided between work and practical activities at home (e.g. cleaning, cooking, or tinkering). For instance, Janek recalls that his parents would never go just for a stroll because, in their view, walking should serve a purpose.

> My wife's [middle-class – K.Ł.] family went for brisk walks or trekking every day. For my mother, that's not imaginable at all.
> **Because? Waste of time?**
> Waste of time, well, no one does that among the people they know. In general, the category of walking, I think to myself, is absent. It has never been there. You can go somewhere, right, to some place, I don't know, go for a beer. With my father we used to. That was a purpose (…) but not a walk for the sake of walking. So, such autotelic activities are completely foreign [in this environment] (Janek, SI).

The second visible cultural change associated with upward mobility can, thus, be referred to as rediscovering leisure time because the "leisure culture"

is another, along with the "book culture," broad set of lifestyle choices cited by all the interviewees. Many upwardly mobile academics had to *learn* that one can have spare time. Tomek and Ewa stressed this fact explicitly.

> **In general: do you have free time?**
> Well, I am just learning it. (…) I didn't check my email for two weeks. I was just so pissed off also at the fact that I felt used. (…) It turned out that just everyone thinks only about themselves. I felt like that, right? Another idiot, right? Well, just a good boy. 'Someone asked me? I will do it'. And then the results are virtually always the same. So this one, well, I just started going to the forest [watching] all these birds [laughs] (Tomek, SI).
> I was diagnosed with Murjas kind of moderate depression and, as it was described … an unprocessed loss after the sudden death of my father. It was mostly about that. And in my case, it manifested itself in the fact that I started working very hard. Such a concrete workaholism and everything outside of work was pushed aside somewhere. And I completely didn't care about anything outside of work.
> **How is it now? Did the therapy help?**
> Yes, yes. I came back to life. I don't work 30 days a month (…).
> **Do you have any free time at all now? After this therapy?**
> Yes, after this therapy, I have free time (Ewa, SI).

In Tomek's narrative, there is a link between his background and lack of spare time. On many occasions, he refers to the "it wouldn't be appropriate" expression ("to nie wypada"), which was a signature feature of his popular class family, used interchangeably with "what would people say," besides "What's the point?" ("po co ci to"), making him resign from his biographical action plans.

> And what I attribute to my class background in the first place, I think, is this Dulska-ness ("Dulszczyzna")[5]. No, maybe not Dulszczyzna actually, it's more bourgeois, but [it's important to look good] on the outside, at home, not necessarily. But it's not even in that sense. [in my case, it was]. In the sense that: 'what would people say?' and that it is important. 'What would people say?' and such individual happiness, well, it was not necessarily important here (Tomek, FI).

[5] "Dulszczyzna" is a term associated with Gabriela Zapolska's 1906 play "The Morality of Mrs. Dulska". As the English translator, Teresa Murjas, explains, this term is "a catch-all for the litany of reprehensible qualities exhibited by bourgeois philistine Aniela Dulska: double standards, endemic conservatism, excessive self-delusion, poor social conscience, weakness of character, hypocrisy, xenophobia, penny-pinching, vanity, pomposity, crassness, lack of compassion, sadistic self-aggrandizement, and bad taste" (Murjas 2007: LXIV).

Now, similarly to Ewa, Tomek started to liberate himself from this way of thinking and tried to find time for himself. However, Ewa's case is quite different because her workaholism was clearly related to a tragic biographical event (the death of her parent). Her social origin, however, could be a fertile ground for this type of reaction because workaholism has been identified as a typical behavior of people trying to "make up" for their more or less objective "deficits" (Hoskins 2014: 137; Case 2017: 20; Gorman 2017: 61; see: Luczaj 2022).

In their free time, the upwardly mobile academics cherished walks and traveling because the ideal of leisure was active. This usually meant sports, which was perceived as a necessary addendum to reading, which was food for thought but not for the body. A few interviewees admitted that they never learned to swim or went hiking for the first time as grown-ups. These are highly illustrative examples of practices that require a parental investment.

> When my husband wanted to invite Cezary on this trip, I said that Cezary would definitely not agree because Cezary said he did not like mountains. And I still don't know how I jumped to the conclusion that he didn't like the mountains. And he went to those mountains with us. And he was hiking. And it was something amazing. He was in the mountains for the first time. And he was so incredibly impressed (Cezary's colleague).

A common pattern was, thus, to contrast the passive habits of the parents with their own "active habits." This, similarly to the criticism of the TV culture, can be attributed to a generational change. At the same time, however, the way in which the interviewees frame their opinions reveals that they are proud of their new lifestyle and, hence, their choices are often aspirational. In this sense, playing tennis or running is a clear declaration of affiliation with the middle classes.

> And, for example, I work out, I run, and they have never played sports of any kind (Andrzej, SI).
> My parents did not play sports. But that wasn't popular back then, either. The bicycle was more of a means of possible transport if you did not have a car, for example. And at the moment, the bicycle is a certain kind of recreational activity. Well, they did not practice skiing (Benedykt, SI).

In this passage, Benedykt, who is generally reluctant to analyze his biography in class terms, gives a clear example of cultural class distinctions. While discussing the use of bikes "back then" he gives a clear working-class meaning of this activity – as a practical, cheap means of transport (Gdula and Sadura 2012) – instead of the middle-class practice of cycling, associated with lifestyle or understood – in an aristocratic manner – as autotelically pleasurable, and thus creating social distinctions. Nina builds a direct connection between the issue of social

class and sport. She makes it clear that passive popular-class hobbies made people like her parents different from the members of the middle classes, where she belongs now.

> **And how do you understand this concept of upward mobility? What are the determinants in general… How do we talk about someone who was mobile?**
> There's the financial indicator. I think that's probably the kind of thing that's easiest to measure, but it's also subjective quite a bit. Well, I think education. In general, I think it's rather such a set of factors: these financial issues plus education. Maybe [also] such small things like hobbies. Well, if someone has a hobby that… Well, I don't know, sailing or…
> **Tennis.**
> Yes, tennis or horseback riding, well, that's different from the hobbies my father had, I don't know, crosswords and playing on a tablet (Nina, SI).

What makes Tamara and Bronia's standpoint unique is that they both talk of sports as a way to take care of one's health and body, which is crucial for the Bourdieusian analysis of sporting activities of the middle classes (Bourdieu 1999).

> I do more sports, maybe, and that's what makes us different in terms of some class there or lifestyle, because I do sports for health [laughs], among other things. And it's very diverse, and I do a lot of it, and they, well, they just walk around (Tamara, SI).
> It seems to me that sport was given very little attention in my upbringing, for example. [laughs]. And it's something like that, for example, which has a negative impact on me now (…) Simply [I didn't know] that there is such a thing as a sports habit. There's something like that when children play sports or even just go to sports camps or just go to extracurricular classes regularly. Well, this sport is somehow present in their lives. In my case, it wasn't like that at all. In the sense that, I don't know, we didn't go skiing. Well, because we didn't have vacations together or anything like that. And as if no one was also concerned about this kind of, let's say, physical health, and probably… Well, I don't know. I would have preferred to learn to ski when I was five, and not, I don't know, two years ago (Bronia, SI).

Upward mobility allowed these interviewees to discover sports as a "disinterested practice," in a middle-class fashion. Bourdieu (1999: 430) argued that according to the "aristocratic philosophy of sport," sports help to shape the body, which becomes an end in itself, as opposed to the instrumental relation to the body typical for the working class, which can help attain other objectives (Bourdieu 1999: 438). Within this framework, practicing sports as an adult is a kind of exclusive hobby: it is purposeless and requires free time. As Bourdieu explained: "the probability of practicing a sport beyond adolescence (and *a fortiori* beyond early manhood or in old age) declines markedly as one moves down the social hierarchy (as does the probability of belonging to a sports club),

whereas the probability of watching one of the reputedly most popular sporting spectacles, such as football or rugby, on television (…) declines markedly as one rises in the social hierarchy" (Bourdieu 1999: 432–433). It is the cult of health and not utilitarian aims (e.g. dreams of upward mobility through sports, see: Jaquet 2014) that motivate the middle-class taste for sports. For this reason, upper classes cherish amateurism, as opposed to a sporting career being excluded from "the field of acceptable trajectories for a child of the bourgeoisie" (Bourdieu 1999: 435). Although practicing sports for leisure was a prime example of a new habitus of upwardly mobile academics, it does not mean that upwardly mobile individuals did not engage in sports or outdoor activities before their mobility, but – as Bourdieu suggests – they did that with different attitudes. For instance, Cezary was a junior professional volleyball player, which, at that time, was a viable career trajectory for him. In this case, the distinction is related not to the practice itself but to a particular way of performing this practice and the senses attributed to it. Similarly, although Stanisław is a keen cyclist (as no one before him in his family), he notices that the passion of his father, gardening, made him spend a lot of time outside. The difference is, however, that although both cycling and gardening can have beneficial health effects, the former, unlike the latter, is a "purposeless" activity.

The category of activeness may but does not have to be related directly to sports. From the middle-class perspective, an interesting, "active" hobby could also be related to eating (discussed below) or fashionable board games, as mentioned by some interviewees. They all constitute "visible idleness" (Veblen 1994) but are not considered "passive." Every opportunity to engage in any highly "rational and rationalized activity" (Bourdieu 1999: 439), as opposed to passive consumption, constituted symbolic boundaries. By having such a hobby, it is demonstrated that this person does not *have* to be constantly productive (Sułkowski 1981: 164), which in turn, is a demonstration that one can afford it (Tittenbrun 2011: 37). To better understand the nature of the 'aristocratic' practices we should analyze traveling habits, which were closely related to sporting activities.

Traveling and Exploring

Traveling is considered to be yet another form of class privilege. Low holiday mobility of popular classes was dictated by the shortages of various types of capital: economic ('How to afford it?') but also cultural ('Where to go? And why is it worth it?') and social ('Who can I go with?'). A very common theme that future professors did not have vacation trips at all, or just a few times in their adolescence, resulted from the composition of capitals possessed by their families. The practice of traveling was closely related to the economic situation of the family.

That is why Aneta, a daughter of a mechanic and an office clerk, recalled that her family went on vacation "only once when she was a teenager."

Those interviewees who were relatively well-off during their childhood, such as Anastazja, a daughter of a miner, admitted more often that they had a chance to travel. Maria and Ewa linked the economic capital and traveling even more clearly.

> As far as I remember, we went on a two-week vacation every year. I know that this also set us apart from all the masses where we lived. Sometimes it was the case that dad had to take out some kind of this interest-free loan for this vacation. Of course, he paid it off within a year without a problem (Ewa, SI).
> The early 90s, especially the second half of the 90s, was such a period of upswing. Well, we simply started going on vacation (Maria, SI).

It would be naïve to attribute increased travel solely to class backgrounds as more options became available to the Polish society getting richer in the 2000s and 2010s. Also, about the same time, low-fare airlines and technological innovations (e.g., AirBnb) revolutionized the way people traveled across Europe. These changes allowed young people to travel more due to the decreasing cost of such travel, or – what is important in post-socialist societies – lifting the political restrictions. At the same time, the transformation of travel patterns should not be associated only with generational changes and technology for at least two reasons. First, despite the decreasing costs, leisure still requires economic capital and cultural capital (the idea to *do* that, and the idea *how* to do that). Second, again, the "sibling argument" applies here. In our interviews, it is clear that limited traveling continued in these branches of the family, which did not experience upward mobility (or experienced much shorter mobility). This is visible in Zofia's interview when she makes a clear boundary between herself and her siblings – a firmly working-class sister and brother located between working- and lower-middle class – who were both more passive in their lifestyle choices.

> Well, they are just so immobile. I am different from them. They do not like to leave the house in the afternoon, right? Well, if they don't like it, well, they don't go out (Zofia, SI).

Some upwardly mobile professors argued that the reason for their little to no mobility during childhood was not entirely economic, but similarly to leisure time, it was not part of the opportunity structure. In other words, a vacation trip was a foreign idea for many families.

> Generally speaking, in the countryside, there is no such thing as a vacation. There is no going away, there is no curiosity to visit something, and it was like this in my dad's case that there were no vacations at all. The only time, the only situations where my

> dad forced himself to travel, was to visit relatives. (…) But generally speaking, I'm the first one who doesn't do that. That is, I do not travel to visit friends and family. I just go to the place I want to go to (Stanisław, SI).
> We, as a family, have never been on vacation. Nowhere. We never went anywhere, nowhere. No, no, no, no. At most, my brother and I could go to my grandparents or to my mother's sister. But it was unimaginable to go to some guesthouse or hotel (Mikołaj, SI).

Cezary's sister points to the cultural deficits of their parents, which made it virtually impossible to travel. In her view, the lack of traveling is, in the first place, the effect of the learned patterns of behavior closely related to cultural capital.

> We have never gone with our parents to any mountains or sea, because – even recently we were talking about this topic – our parents probably would not be able to organize it logistically (…) Or they would not even know how to book accommodation there (Cezary's sister).

Ewa's interview is especially instructive because it proves that even in these popular-class families where traveling was possible, it was not a cherished practice of crucial importance. She was raised by the river, but her parents never took her on trips in the local area to teach her to swim. Although this family had the opportunity to travel, swimming was never considered an essential social skill.

> We can't swim. Neither I nor my husband nor my daughter…
> **Too far to the beach?**
> Exactly, too far. We were raised near the Vistula River. Me and my husband, we can't swim. It somehow happened that our daughter can't either. But somehow… Maybe that's why we were attracted by places a little farther, right? So that in general, as I say, the mountains… (Ewa's mother).

Summing up these examples and dozens of other excerpts from the interviews, it seems that in the families of origin, domestic traveling, besides work-related travel, was limited to visiting relatives or attending other significant (but rare) events, such as a family member's military oath.

International traveling seems to be a separate issue because, until the late 1980s, international travel was a luxury available to very few. In older generations, foreign trips were unachievable for political reasons, except for the selected socialist states.

> My parents have never been abroad. I think my mother was somewhere when she was still in school. Or no, in the beginning, when she was working in a factory, and they had a staff exchange, probably with, I don't know, Bulgaria? Well, what else could it be those days? Well, it was probably the only trip abroad (Nina, SI).

Even if international travel was not entirely impossible, it was expensive – both in socialist Poland and after 1989. For this reason, even those upwardly mobile academics who traveled could explore only Poland.

> Certainly, there are differences, but this is due, however, to the 'civilizational progress.' We, for example, as children, we traveled with our parents every summer vacation, but these were trips in Poland: certain, repetitive, always with the whole family, but these were… I have never been abroad with my parents (Benedykt, SI).
> When it comes to finances, I didn't have money for books, for language camps, which I really wanted to go to, I only looked at the brochures [laughs] that my mother brought me from Neckermann,[6] but I could never go to any camp in Malta, because I couldn't afford it (Tamara, SI).

Tamara, born in the 1980s, makes it clear that the lack of international travel was a consequence of the economic situation (as opposed to her peers who traveled internationally). The reasoning of Benedykt, born in the 1960s, is more complex because he argues that the possibility of international travel was a result of "civilizational progress." While the economic development of Poland and technological advancements are certainly part of the explanation, he completely ignores the experience of middle- and upper-middle-class children who could acquire international capital through travel in their youth, in the 1990s (as Tamara's peers), or, in selected cases, also in socialist Poland, although mainly within the Eastern Bloc. According to our interviewees, international travel requires not only economic capital. Upwardly mobile professors noted that in order to explore the world, it is vital to have at least a minimum amount of specific cultural capital, to begin with. In an interesting part of her interview, when trying to define upward mobility, Małgorzata states:

> Certainly, getting higher education, thus earning more money, although not always. It turns out that, in Poland, it does not go hand in hand. Well, I don't know, maybe it's related to gaining experience, some kind of visiting the broader world, i.e. contact with people who are also more educated. I don't know, maybe somehow such a greater "openness to the world" (Małgorzata, SI).
> Travel, for example, is not only related, I think, to finances but also to a certain courage. It takes a certain amount of courage to make that first trip abroad, especially if you're, I don't know, in your 20s, and you've never done it before because you were sitting at home (Nina, SI).

The category "openness to the world," by which Małgorzata summarizes the beneficial impact of traveling, or "courage" as used by Nina, refers to the dispositions of habitus resulting in openness and willingness to travel, is classed. For this

---

[6] A German travel agency also operating in Poland. It offered package holidays abroad from the 1990s to 2019.

reason, Nina, who previously said that her parents never traveled abroad (except to Bulgaria), could not really imagine them abroad, and Estera's brother, also an upwardly mobile academic, stresses that his life is completely different from the life of his parents.

> They have a job in one place, and they spend all their time almost exclusively in one city unless they go on vacation. They leave Poland very, very rarely, so their whole world is around some such small place in Poland. In the last 15–20 years, I lived in Poznan, Paris, Cambridge, and now here [a city in Western Europe]. Every year I go at least 2–3 times to different places in Europe and the world. So I have seen more of the world. My work allows me to see more of the world so that I also live differently, really (Estera's brother).

When the economic and cultural obstacles ceased to limit them, travel (both national and international) became a preferred hobby of the upwardly mobile academics, who could do it either for leisure or also during business trips. The traveling patterns they narrated did not resemble, however, what David Brooks (2000) discusses in the context of American "bobos," bohemian-bourgeois upper classes seeking true adventure and self-realization in faraway lands. The modest travel plans for the present day may steam not only from the family background but also from the current economic situation. Taking into account the Polish academic salaries, which are far below the salaries of other middle-class professions and some popular-class professions, the lack of travel seems to be associated rather with the fact that someone is a popular-class academic at the moment than the fact one had been a popular-class child. The latter is, however, far from being irrelevant even in adult life. The colleagues of Tamara and Mikołaj explained their limited travel plans in an almost identical way, which can be briefly summarized: if one did not have inherited economic capital, this person could not afford to travel on an academic salary.

> If she could, also if the financial situation allowed it, she probably would travel somewhere farther, well, but times are as they are – there was no possibility, or there was a pandemic. And thanks to this, she just discovered some closer areas (Tamara's colleague, SI).
>
> I think the differences are due to purely financial reasons. For example, well, my best friends and I go abroad very often. Well, now (it's) the pandemic, but somehow it always had big value for me. And even when my mother also did not have too much money, she always put some aside to go somewhere at least twice a year – as a development [experience] to see another world, hear another language, and so I cultivate this. It seems to me that Mikołaj would also be so eager to go. It's just that, well, either there is no financial space, or right now, with a child, it is also more difficult (Mikołaj's colleague).

In this quote, we can see a clear contrast between the popular-class families of our interviewees and the middle-class family of Mikołaj's colleague, where the mother was able to "put aside" some money for traveling. Although her family wasn't a typical wealthy socialist elite, her mother was a highly skilled specialist and worked a respectable job in a major Polish city, which was a great privilege compared to Mikołaj – a son of a farmer and a cleaner, raised in the countryside.

The last quote, by Andrzej, a renowned professor holding highly visible positions, is especially meaningful. Andrzej, unlike the other interviewees, refers not to leisure travel but to the material conditions for educational mobility.

> My son, who started college this year, wanted to leave [to another city] because I always told him that real studies are studies independent of parents [laughs]. And he wanted to go to Poznan to study. Well, poverty is all around. And there's more and more poverty in our country, too. And we told him that if he went to Poznan, we would not be able to support him. And, you know, this is an important aspect. Some people can afford to, for example… I was also in colleges in the UK, for example, I know what this is about. And I would like my son to go to college, for example. But I can't afford it (Andrzej, SI).

Andrzej argues that his children are not able to choose any university they wish due to his middling material status associated with professorial salary. The analysis of willingness and structures of opportunity associated with travel patterns suggest how deep the divisions within the middle classes are. Just like sport trains healthy bodies, traveling (national or international) trains many kinds of sensibilities and collects experiences that upwardly mobile individuals could not acquire in their youth. The lack of transnational capital suggests that in becoming members of the middle class, the future academics may have had a sense of deficit as compared to their privileged middle-class fellow students and co-workers. New opportunities, furthermore, did not mean that class mobile academics automatically became keen travelers, which would be economically possible, at least for some of them. The plans for leisure trips were, however, often constrained by economic reality. Due to unattractive salaries, some upwardly mobile professors cannot make up for the years in which they could not travel and explore other cultures unless they go on business trips. The academic salary was certainly, insufficient to be a conscious, "slow" traveler, i.e. travel in the style preferred by the interviewees. For instance, Teresa's partner made it clear that the all-inclusive package holidays would not interest her, as she, along with other interviewees, emphasized that traveling is mainly about exploring and not just spending time by the pool. These opinions suggest that being an academic in Poland does not mean that one has automatically become the wealthy middle class.

Eating Habits

In order to analyze how social class is associated with eating habits, we asked our core participants to discuss various routines and preferences from their childhood, adolescence, and adult life when they became class crossovers. Furthermore, along with standard interview questions, parents, siblings, and colleagues were additionally presented with a few photos of different dishes and asked which one was the type of restaurant our interviewees would choose. When discussing these preferences, it is crucial to avoid any kind of oversimplification, which is likely to occur in every discussion of tastes. The main advantage is to put these decisions in appropriate contexts. For instance, Cezary, in an elaborated reflection on changes in his food preferences, makes it clear that culinary innovations were not very much welcome in his family of origin, which is consistent with recent quantitative research on classed patterns of food consumption (Domański et al. 2015: 87). This pattern, however, was influenced by his traditional father, as opposed to the mother, who enjoyed some experimentation.

> But my mother, for example… when she began to be alone, she also began to experiment with cooking. My old man also used to laugh that my mother generally had a "California prune" phase. It was tomato soup with dried California prunes. And she added it to everything. And sort of… Well. But my old man was, you know, he always just… laughed about it because I think it bothered him that my mother had her own ideas (Cezary, SI).

In this excerpt, Cezary argues that his father was traditional through and through, not only in the kitchen but also in other spheres of life. Although acting according to the pattern of pre-figurative culture, his son tried to persuade him to use public transportation instead of a car (which constitutes yet another instance of the "reversed transfer"), the father refused to do so, which in Cezary's interpretation does not have to do much with his comfort but the fear and lack of digital skills required, for instance, to buy a bus ticket.

Tomek's account, in turn, suggests that the observed patterns are demi-regularities, which can be a trap for the sociologist but also for middle-class people who interact with popular classes and often have many stereotypes. His middle-class in-laws were victims of such kind of thinking.

> And here it turned out that mom is knowledgeable about wines, you know. No one used swear words, you know, no one got drunk, and then Magda [Tomek's wife] also said that they [the in-laws] were surprised. That they just assumed that there would be "flaki" [traditional Polish tripe stew] and we would drink five bottles of vodka. Well, it was more of such a class experience or such a contrast (Tomek, SI).

Nevertheless, despite some exceptional features of their families, even Tomek and Cezary agree that they were socialized to traditional Polish cuisine. All the narratives about dining in the family of origin pointed to the same patterns: the food was usually heavy and fatty, with simple ingredients, which corresponds with the preferences of the popular classes initially discussed by Bourdieu (1984) in the context of 20th century France, and also captured in quantitative surveys about contemporary Poland (Domański et al. 2015: 178–179).

> My parents are rather culinary traditionalists, potatoes, pork chops, cucumber salad [mizeria], and other salads (Aneta, SI).
> When I was a child, simply, we got typical traditional Polish food at home. That is, a day without potatoes was a day wasted (Ewa, SI).
> At our place, the cuisine was definitely homemade, in the sense of the lower class, to use a class language. That is, flour and meat because here we didn't… In the sense that it wasn't a communist period [anymore], so there was no shortage of meat, so you could easily buy meat (Cezary, SI).

Andrzej's interview goes even one step further to demonstrate that his parents not only did not share his new culinary preferences but even tried to force him to eat like them, in a very traditional way.

> It's a huge gap [when it comes to food]. I don't know. It's too much to say. I'm vegetarian. They were always carnivorous. I wanted to be a vegetarian already before college. And I was vegetarian before college. And I had a problem when I wanted to be vegetarian, for example, I communicated this to my mother or my parents, of course, but my mother lied to me. And for example, she would add meat to tomato soup (Andrzej, SI).

The situation described above is an example of a power struggle between children and parents but also a more general struggle for the legitimization of certain eating practices, taking the form of "cultural wars over tradition and community" (Kopczyńska 2021: 223). An open conflict is one of a few clashes between popular- and middle-class cultures visible in the course of analysis of culinary preferences.

Nina's testimony is especially important because it suggests that changes in consumption rituals and norms cannot be explained solely on the basis of generational factors and a general shift towards more healthy and international food in Poland. These social changes are certainly very important, but they do not account for the entire transformation narrated by the interviewees. Should that be true, such a great difference would not occur between the two sisters, even if Nina was a few years younger. What makes them different is rather the level of education and occupation (being the main determinants of class) than the age difference.

> My sister's lifestyle is definitely similar to my parents'. In terms that she never… When it comes to, for example, this, well, way of spending time, or just trips, she doesn't do it. It is, however, sitting at home [instead]. I mean, a little bit with that more modern *vibe* [said in English], meaning that sometimes you can go out for pizza, sometimes you can get in a car and drive somewhere, but it's more like going to visit family, or, I don't know, visit a local attraction (Nina, SI).

When we asked the parents about the eating habits of our core interlocutors, it turned out that there was one particular kind of food that distinguished upwardly mobile academics from their parents: the preference for seafood, which is compatible with what we know from the quantitative studies (Domański et al. 2015: 80). Their age and class made the tastes of the interviewees clearly distinguishable from the tastes known from their family homes.

> I would not eat seafood, so to speak. When I come [to his place], I don't eat this, this I won't eat, that I won't eat. I don't want shrimp. I don't touch it at all.
> **Then what do you eat there [at your brother's]?**
> When he made sushi, no one wanted to eat it. He was offended that no one wanted to eat it, and the guy made an effort [for nothing] (…) I mean, well, he did try but we are such traditionalists (Mikołaj's brother).

> I [would get] a salad and pizza as well. Asian – I like it. I do not like this.
> **The shrimps are out.**
> They are out.
> **You do not like it?**
> I like trout. I wouldn't put [shrimps] it in my mouth at all, you know (…). Those frog legs didn't scare me because they were so baked, you couldn't tell what it was (Tamara's mother).
> What else do we have here?
> **Some pasta, seafood.**
> Well, that's right, seafood is out.
> **Out? Why?**
> No, seafood is out. I like this, oh, pierogi (Estera's father)

A common rejection of seafood was confirmed when we cross-examined various interviews done within the same household. This supports the hypothesis that experimenting with new dishes is the domain of the upper class (Domański et al. 2015: 85).

> **And will you give me an example of such a thing that you cooked and they did not like it?**
> For example, shrimp. Probably it's about two things: seafood is exotic, but it's also associated with luxury, and superfluity (Estera's brother).

In sharp contrast, the narrations of class mobile academics were saturated with descriptions of what we can refer to as specifically middle-class tastes. Upward mobility allowed the interviewees not only to eat "more expensive and healthy" food (Teresa) but also made them open to new culinary experiences, what we know from the core interviewees with their families and their colleagues. Thus, mobility was associated with omnivorousness, though not the cultural one (Peterson and Kern 1996), so eagerly studied by subsequent generations of sociologists. The class-mobile academics were ready to try new dishes from different culinary traditions and switch to a vegetarian diet which, although getting more and more popular in Poland (Kopczyńska 2021: 222), is still a cultural niche, and displayed a general openness to eat out or order a ready-to-eat diet plan (Domański 2021: 215). These choices, at least partly associated with environmental determinism (i.e., the role of the academic culture on their consumption practices), made them distant from their parents and, sometimes, siblings with other life trajectories.

> That's my impression, but I am not 100% sure that he was moving in the direction of vegetarianism. He also liked to experiment with food. I think he knew how to cook.
> **That is to say… he was searching.**
> Yes, yes. He searched for different things like that. I even once went with him to a bar in Wroclaw with some Korean soups, but in the end, neither I finished the soup nor, I think, did he. But it was his idea to try it (Tomek's colleague).

Probably the most classed food experience was the description of Bronia's eating habits done by her colleague, which reveals her mixed dispositions.

> The quality of food was important to her, so she went to the farmers' markets. And she tended to eat fairly healthy, not crazy healthy. She also likes Polish and traditional cuisine, but she cooks herself. Now I know that she cooked during the pandemic because she had less work now.
> **How…?**
> In a Thermomix,[7] during the pandemic (Bronia's colleague).

Bronia's case is specific because she was an omnivore: with a strong liking of traditional cuisine coupled with a taste for Korean or Mexican dishes. Furthermore, Bronia applied middle-class standards to the popular kitchen – she cared about the quality of food she consumed and used a proverbial middle-class kitchen appliance – a Thermomix. Similarly to Bronia, even if the upwardly mobile interviewees were interested in traditional Polish cuisine, most

[7] A multi-purpose kitchen appliance. Reputed as versatile and helpful but very expensive, it is a symbol of middle classness.

typically, their taste was usually a variation in the spirit of slow food and conscious eating.

> We also cooked together lately at those vegan festivals. And that's when Estera took the initiative to make such a Polish dinner. And we just had such burgers made of vegetables and millet groats, and some potatoes, raw salad (Estera's colleague).
> My parents eat very good homemade stuff, and I don't want to, and as a result, I don't eat such good stuff. Such good, homemade Polish meals or potatoes and pork chops. God, how I like pork chops! Sometimes when they are in a good mood, I'll scrounge up chops from them or just something. And in addition, now my husband is on a box diet, so you can say that's true upward mobility "he's on a box diet." But he has to, because he just happened to be not very slim for a long time, so he needed to lose a lot of weight. But before he went on this box diet, it also seemed to me that our food… I mean, our way of eating was… I mean, the dishes we ate more were a bit more varied, that is, not only was there Polish cuisine, but we also tried various Indian, Italian and things like that. We made them for ourselves at home (Sabina, SI).
> I make fun of my husband that he has a plebeian palate. That he would only eat bigos [hunter's stew] and pork chops. When it comes to beer, on the other hand, for example, it's only top-quality craft beer. And I'm, again, open-minded. Meaning some seafood and some combinations of meat and fruit. Such sweet ones. So I cook more for my husband according to his preference, and I experiment more for myself. Thai cuisine, Mexican, Italian. Whatever comes to my head (Ewa, SI).

In the description of Ewa's husband, a store manager, we observe a mix of dispositions (traditional food and craft beer), whereas the narrator presents herself as an open, modern person when it comes to eating habits, which was typical for the entire sample. This kind of omnivorousness was another kind of cultural openness besides curiosity about the world, which was observed in one of the previous sections of this chapter.

As described in Chapter 3, the taste for traditional cuisine could also be a form of re-discovering one's roots. Although in their youth, having food from their parent's farm or garden could be a reason for the interviewees, such as Estera or Tomek, to be intimidated, from today's perspective, they admit that they were lucky to be raised in such a privileged environment. Not until they became highly-educated adults did they understand that the natural produce straight from the farmer is a precious commodity in late capitalism.

> I laughed at myself that I never thought I would ever dig in the ground because it seemed to me that this was, in general, what it was all about, right? That I suddenly underwent such a transformation. This is kind of common ground, for example, with my father, with whom I find it difficult to have a common interest. It turns out, however, that we can at least talk to each other about tomatoes, right? Or about farming, that's really something he knows a lot about (Estera, SI).

In this passage, not only does Estera make it clear that the eating preference may be a kind of a "back to the roots" attitude occurring when, in retrospect, one starts accepting popular-class culture but also illustrates that popular class cultural capital may be useful in some domains of aristocratic consumption. The healthy food movement cherishes exactly the practices widespread within the middle classes.

The third phenomenon occurring when popular-class culture meets middle-class culture is the introduction new set of restrictions in place of the old ones. The middle-class openness to new tastes is not identical to a claim that being middle-class means being open to absolutely every cuisine and kind of food. In the course of mobility, the old economically motivated popular-class rejections are being replaced with new middle-class restrictions related to self-control. In fact, when the class-mobile academics adopted middle-class culture, they could become more restrictive in other spheres, which becomes obvious in Małgorzata's interview.

> My son is three years old, so we can trick him [by not giving him candy] [laughs]. But it seems to me that my brother's children have more permission to eat sweets, some colored drinks, or some weird just colored sweets. And I think they eat more fatty food, though, more of that fried stuff, more of that seasoned stuff with such less natural spices (Małgorzata, SI).

In this passage, Małgorzata makes it clear where the boundary between the popular and middle class is located. The dispositions behind her choices are typical for Bourdieusian middle- and upper classes, whose taste does not stem "from necessity" but is ruled by legitimized practices (in this case: the strong preference for healthy food). Without social mobility, the openness to new tastes or practices would be much less likely to occur, but the new restrictions would be equally unlikely to appear, as the example of her sibling suggests.

Alcohol

The topic of drinking alcohol requires a separate discussion for two distinct reasons. First, it is a vital part of Polish culture (Pobłocki 2014). Secondly, it highlights mismatches between class cultures – the theme of alcohol consumption occurred in a few meaningful parts of different interviews. In the interview with Maria, the traditional drinking pattern was one of the rare occasions where we could identify popular class practices at all. This is how the future professor remembers how she, as a teenager, celebrated her victory in a high school national contest (*olimpiada*).

> My parents were incredibly proud of me. I remember when that day I came back from Warsaw. I don't know how it happened, but anyway, we celebrated it with a drink… It was not heavy drinking…

Symbolically.
Symbolically one glass each, but my dad put the rectified spirit on the table. Such real rectified spirit, and he taught me then to drink rectified spirit. He said that if I was mature enough to win the olympiad [in humanities], then perhaps, a glass of spirit wouldn't hurt me. And I remember that we all drank this glass of spirit and then that we were all very happy (Maria, FI).

At first sight, Maria's account presents a typical alcohol consumption, which was a necessary element of many family celebrations. When we give it a deeper look, it is perplexing for a few reasons. First, as a teenager, she was not legally allowed to drink alcohol. Secondly, the consumed alcohol was not wine or beer (which also happens in middle-class homes) but rectified spirit. This excerpt is interesting as a contrastive case to the general attitude of the interviewees towards alcohol. Usually, our upwardly mobile interviewees openly rejected or ridiculed traditional drinking. Mikołaj, for instance, condemned alcohol consumption as such and pointed out that class differentiates what one drinks but not the problems it causes.

The poor and the rich both drink. Only the poor drink wine for 5 zlotys, and the rich drink Johnnie Walker or good whiskey. And that's the difference, but the problems are the same (Mikołaj, SI).

Knowing that the intelligentsia in Poland never keep off alcohol (Komorowska 1980; Sulima 2000; Kosiński 2008), this overarching 'rejection' narrative is rather unexpected among its members. The relationship between a fierce critique of drinking alcohol and upward mobility was clearly visible when Stanisław explicitly stated it as the main reason why he did not want to attend the funeral of his sister, who died tragically. Although alcoholism is a problem across social strata and classes, festive, ostentatious drinking is a vital part of the popular-class culture, which may be repulsive to upwardly mobile individuals.

So my dad didn't agree that we should scatter the ashes, so we were going to bring them here. At first, I didn't realize what that meant. It meant that we would just have exactly the same ceremony as we've had all these years. That is like a wedding, simply. Only supposedly, in a sad mood, but actually with vodka and so on. And this was terrible for me. I didn't feel like meeting this family at all. We have nothing in common with each other at all (Stanisław, SI).

This was more than a usual lifestyle disagreement because Stanisław's colleague identified the relationship with alcohol as one of the key problems he knew about the family of his collaborator.

> As far as I know, there was quite a problem in that family, especially when it came to his mother's… His relationship with his mother. I know that it is alcohol-related, but I don't know anything more than that, or at least I don't remember (Stanisław's colleague).

The reluctance to excessive alcohol consumption in Urszula's case also had clearly classed roots. For instance, when she narrated partying during high-school times and alluded that she used to party a lot and had a "rich socio-romantic life." When, in the second sub-session of the interview, the interviewer asked her to elaborate on this topic, she backtracked, saying that it was not so much "hard-partying" and related her attitude to the family environment where alcoholism was a serious problem.

> There [in the countryside], for the first time, I saw violence, serious violence. Because my grandmother, well, she had these five children, but she had these children with an alcoholic, such a rural, you know, violent alcoholic.
> **In general, in this pool of interviews, there was a lot about some high school and party life, just romantic, drug life.**
> Well, in my case, you know, drugs, it was more pot… in the third, fourth grade of high school. It was probably more alcohol than drugs, pot.
> **Okay. But it wasn't like you were hanging out every weekend, either.**
> No. Then I started seeing this guy (…) It was in my senior year. There was some kind of pattern where once a week, we were interviewer alcohol. And I remember that at some point it also… was a problem for me, right, that once a week…
> **That? That was too often, right?**
> Once a week or twice a week on those Fridays, and Saturdays, alcohol was there. And it was just hardcore, right?
> **I mean that it was a problem for you, right? That he was such a heavy drinker/**
> That there is alcohol and that it is hardcore. If they, you know, buy beer, they buy five. When they drink vodka, that… [the interviewee freezes]
> **And why was that a problem for you?**
> Well, because, you know, well, if there is such a pattern. Once or twice a week, it was already…
> **From the perspective of a seventeen-year-old?**
> You know what, even from the perspective of … Because there was an alcohol problem in the family, you know. My mother… My father never drank. He drank at Easter and Christmas… Neither my mother nor father smoked. My mother always talked about alcohol as such [bad thing], you know (Urszula, FI).

As we have seen, for Urszula, excessive drinking was associated with a figure of a violent rural alcoholic, which was the antithesis of a middle-class high-functioning alcoholic. Thus, when she found herself in the intelligentsia circles, her attitude towards alcohol was complex. Being a young person, she enjoyed partying, but partying had its limits. Unlike her boyfriend at the time and other children of the middle- and upper classes, referred to in the Polish popular media

discourse as "patho-intelligentsia" (*patointeligencja*)[8] (Galanciak and Siwicki 2020), she was not proud of overdosing on alcohol or drugs. Urszula decided to set limits to prevent the reproduction of the problems known from her family of origin.

Aneta represented a different strategy – a symbolic critique of alcohol consumption – when she ironically commented on her father's habits. At the same time, she was an enthusiast of craft alcohol, but not vodka nor heavy drinking. Unlike Mikołaj, Stanisław, or Urszula, she did not reject drinking in general, and her narrative has clear generational underpinnings but, as we shall see, it is not devoid of class markers. Both factors seem to be at least equally important in framing her narrative.

> Alcohol was never overdosed in our house. It has never been a problem, whereas, well, the typical alcohol consumption pattern of my parents is pure Polish vodka. My dad believes that this is the safest alcohol, after which nothing bad will ever happen to a person. And indeed, he drinks, well, with typical shots, simply straight vodka, and then drinks something and nibbles on something. For him, this is the best way to consume alcohol. My mother most often drinks this alcohol diluted with juice or with soda in the form of some kind of a cocktail. And, for example, in my and my sister's generation, it looks different. We prefer lighter alcohols, beer, wine, cider, this low percentage alcohol (…) For my parents, wine is some kind of an incomprehensible invention (Aneta, SI).

Aneta pointed to the conservative belief that vodka is the "healthiest" alcohol, which happens to be the most common alcohol choice among the working classes –which makes them clearly different from higher management and specialists who often replace vodka with dry wine or other spirits (e.g. whisky) (Domański et al. 2015: 113). Aneta's father clearly subscribes to this pattern. Her ironic narration can, thus, stem from the unwillingness to be stigmatized as an alcoholic, which in Polish society often happens to popular-class families, as opposed to middle-class families (Okraska 2022). In her narrative, she indeed presents herself as a sophisticated drinker, and subscribes to "modern" drinking patterns. Like many members of her generation, she appreciates craft alcohol. However, in another part of the interview, Aneta makes the connection between social class and alcohol consumption more explicit by stressing the "environmental patterns" among construction workers in Poland. This passage is not just a statement of opinion. In her narrative, in contrast to her family members, Aneta tried to symbolically distance herself from the traditional drinking culture

---

[8] The name is derived from the song "Patointeligencja" (2019) by a Polish rapper Mata, the son of Marcin Matczak, a well-known professor of law.

perceived as a typical lower-class culture. Thus, alcohol consumption patterns serve as a cultural distinction.

> [My uncle had] some history of spine disorder and things like that, typical for the construction industry. Also later, a little, under the influence of personal problems, a little under the influence of environmental patterns and colleagues, [he had] alcohol problems, and generally, the last years of my uncle's life were not cheerful (Aneta, SI).

The third source of reluctance towards alcohol, besides bad memories from childhood and its old-fashioned (non-legitimized) character, is middle-class restraint stemming from the adapted "definition of the role." For this reason, Nina not so much rejects or ridicules drinking practices – as other interviewees more often did – but notices that it does not match with someone of her social standing. In Nina's narrative, we clearly see a focus on her new social position.

> I also impose this social role of a university employee on myself to some extent. And not that I don't swear because I think it's wrong for a woman or just anyone. I just think it's wrong for me as a faculty member. Therefore, I will probably never again get as drunk as a lord, simply in a local pub (Nina, SI).

Summing up this part, we could see that although drinking alcohol, including spirits, is still a common practice among Poles, the majority of the interviewees distanced themselves from this practice. In many cases, this attitude was class-related as it evoked unpleasant memories (Stanisław, Urszula), symbolized the old-fashioned culture of partying (Aneta), or stemmed from the willingness to be part of middle-classes, at least if someone refers to the bourgeois, rather than bohemian definitions (like Nina does) which, in turn, would be rather conducive to excessive alcohol consumption.

Clothing & Post-Materialism

Although taking meticulous care of clothing is not among the practices characteristic for the members of the intelligentsia, the interviewees felt that clothing makes them different from their parents. Their preferences and choices largely subscribe to the opposition between "to be" and "to have," and – as the past generation of the intelligentsia – disapproved of the ostentatious style of a nouveau riche (Domke 2020; Zarycki and Warczok 2020), namely the economic fraction of the dominant class and technocrats being in the middle (Zarycki and Warczok 2020: 50). Most of all, however, for the intelligentsia it was the *psyche,* not the *physis* which counted most (Domke 2020: 177). In this manner, the upwardly mobile academics rejected the "elegant clothing and

neatness" of their popular-class parents, who aspired to the fashionable styles of the economic fraction of the middle classes.

> My mother dresses as a normal person [jak człowiek] [laughs]
> [**Laughs**]
> In a sense. Because she pays a lot of attention to clothing, to match a skirt to a blouse, to a jacket. And before the interview with you, she thought for a very long time about what to wear to look good.
> **Really? Oh, dear [laughs] Oh, mother.**
> A 'thorn in her side' that's a too strong expression, but she complained much more than once that I didn't want to dress like a normal person. I just generally wear jeans, or corduroys, and t-shirts. And so it stayed that way. In this sense, as you can see, I continue not to pay much attention to my clothing (Sabina, SI).

> My mother has to have everything ironed, while I don't pay much attention to it, well, and these household duties for her are simply a priority (…), while for me, this priority is time with my children. And I prefer it when they have unironed blouses, and we just spend this time playing or going out (Oliwia, SI).

The importance of taking care of one's own appearance – salient in the business world – contrasted with the attitudes of many interviewed upwardly mobile women and men. In this respect, they subscribe to a broader cultural trend of young people, who gladly replace elegant clothes with more relaxed styles. In this sense, the difference between the parents and the children seemed perfectly understandable. On the other hand, in their choices, the interviewees also resembled typical members of the intelligentsia – younger and older. The emblematic example was introduced by Nina, who depicted one of her professors.

> I have this professor of mine who's just been such a slob lately. And no one seems to expect it from him either, and everyone is just used to it by now because he's a good scientist. So why can't he walk around in that worn-out sweater? Stained. I remember clearly that we were at some dinner (…). There was ice cream. And it fell off his spoon. He just took it off the tablecloth. He got dirty afterward and wiped it off himself. He didn't care. And I kind of see it, too, that there is no ostracism, that he is behaving badly, for example. Maybe there used to be, but he is such an important person and talented enough that now he just can [behave like that]. Well, I'm thinking to myself, well, so what? Well, why should I care? I know that I am in this job not to look nice and hold a fork well, so this somehow always comforts me (Nina, SI).

This attitude represented a view of the intellectual faction of the middle class but sharply contrasted with the dominant faction of the middle class, e.g. people possessing high economic capital (e.g. business people, entrepreneurs), and the popular classes which try to emulate them. It also has very little to do with the

North American "bobos" (Brooks 2000), e.g. these members of the middle class who try to combine the corporate culture with bohemian values, but despite their first impression of sloppiness, are sensitive to appearance (think: Steve Jobs's signature look). It did not, however, mean that for this group of interviewees, appearance was not important at all, but it is clear that the values attached to clothing were different. Even if these interviewees cared about the quality of clothes, they did not wish to be "elegant." Instead of elegance, they stressed comfort, and instead of a fashionable look, they put a premium on the manufacturing condition of their clothes.

> Now I pay attention to the composition and also to the place of production. Style – no, because I have always dressed comfortably, so such a lady in a suit is not me. To me, it has to be comfortable. Comfortable and warm (Ewa, SI).

This change of attitude towards clothing styles is certainly related to age, as post-materialism and environmental awareness spread in the younger generation. Nevertheless, the "postmaterialist thesis holds that postmaterialist and liberal values tend to be strongest in affluent locations and among people in higher socioeconomic positions," and, for this reason, these attitudes are entangled with class cultures (Zhang, Brym, and Andersen 2017: 65). Many studies empirically proved the existence of a class divide "between middle-class post-materialists and working-class materialists who occupy the lower end of the social class spectrum" (Booth 2021: 141). In the Polish cultural context, the "anti-Bobo" attitude may be amplified by the ideal of ascetic intelligence widespread in Eastern Europe (Zarycki 2008: 67) as opposed to the United States. The self-analysis done by Oliwia and Ewa reveals a clear disdain for the material world.

> Well, we already have a kind of comfort that we can also take care of other needs. So it seems to me that I personally pay less attention to what my son is wearing, for example [laughter], and I prefer to allocate these funds for, I don't know, learning English or, I don't know, for some vacation trip, such a vacation with the family. I don't know, well I pay less attention to what our floor in the apartment is like and more to these needs, which one may refer to as "higher" – these ones I bother about (Oliwia, SI).
>
> I am not a very demanding person. I'm satisfied with the working conditions that I have, and I don't feel that I should earn four times more (Ewa, SI).

In these fragments, the habitus of the academic intelligentsia is visible in their attachment to "higher values" (as opposed to pragmatically oriented business executives) or rather low financial expectations (as opposed to medical doctors, who express their dissatisfaction very clearly in Poland, despite having incomparably higher salaries). In some instances, this intelligentsia's attitude stemming from the

post-materialist values resembled the popular class tastes stemming from necessity (Bourdieu 1984). This accidental convergence of perspectives is well visible in Aneta's quote, which contrasts with the tendency of the dominant faction of the middle class to stress status through elegant clothing, preferably with premium logos on it.

> My parents always dressed like this. Well, I would describe it as modest and practical. My dad, on a daily basis, which hasn't changed for many years, wears jeans. In the summer season – shorts, meaning some kind of knee-length. The top depends on the season, either some kind of sweater or a t-shirt. For example, I rarely, very rarely, see my dad in a suit and tie. Actually, only for some of the biggest family events (…) I also always saw some kind of comfortable footwear on my mom's feet. It was never stilettos or shoes with some kind of high heels. Rather, flat or low heels. By the way, I also have a similar approach. The leg must stand on the ground and not pretend to be standing, as I call it (Aneta, SI).

Although working-class clothing style and intelligentsia's clothing style (Zarycki 2008) may have very little in common because, as we have seen in Aneta's testimony, her father would not wear a suit, and conversely, we could not imagine a traditional member of the intelligentsia in shorts, they share the same assumption: clothing is not very important. Janek represented this attitude until he met his middle-class spouse.

> I don't know if he had his taste. I don't really think he had any sort of taste at all. He didn't think about what he was wearing at all (Janek's wife).

The preponderance of this ascetic and anti-consumption attitude does not mean, however, that upwardly mobile scholars are never interested in clothing. For instance, Janek, since he met his partner, underwent a sharp shift from no style to a passion for fashion, which has been noticed by his close collaborator and friend.

> Well, the best proof was this remark. He drew my attention to this, half jokingly but half seriously. (…) Context: he came to London before me. I was on a month-long study visit, and he only stopped there for a while. So he drops in there, but he is in his element because he is dressed like all the colleagues in this British institute. And I was from Poland – [I looked] like out of place in some jacket (Janek's colleague).

In Janek's case, the new style had little to do with signaling his material status but was a way of expressing the intellectual's style. The change of style was a symbolic transformation, a remedy for the deficits strongly emphasized by him in both interviews. An appropriate look enabled Janek to be an old-fashioned intellectual and, as such, did not require high investments of economic capital.

That is why his colleague clearly distinguished Janek from people who "would drive a BMW," not only because they could afford it but also because they were "simply closer to businessmen," whose snobbery was visible through cultural choices. Similarly, although Helena does care about her appearance, in contrast to the bourgeois faction of the middle class, she chooses popular chain stores rather than designer clothes.

> I think this is something like Vistula,[9] Zara,[10] probably not Patrizia Aryton,[11] because there the prices are just very high. Beautiful things, but the prices are very high (Helena's colleague).

In this description, Helena's colleague puts a premium on the prices, which makes chain stores different from more upscale brands such as Patrizia Aryton. Even the local luxury brand was perceived as inappropriate for the member of the intelligentsia, not to mention global luxury brands desired by the bourgeoise middle classes. The colleague of Helena was also convinced that our core interviewee would never buy a lamp just because this lamp was expensive. Instead, Helena, in her opinion, prefers interiors interestingly "combining many carefully selected elements," i.e. she displayed a taste for eclecticism, an attitude which Bourdieu found among the upper classes (Bourdieu 1984). For this reason, Helena was a model interviewee who, as opposed to the interviewees like Oliwia, Ewa, (or Janek from before the change), in a rather negligent style, dressed like a traditional intelligent.

Małgorzata, similarly to Helena, was proud of being able to have a good style and not spending too much money on that. She contrasted her fashion choices with the styles of her relatives, often stressing that small towns usually do not offer many shopping options. By doing so, she suggests that upward mobility is also geographical mobility: from the peripheral regions to the centers.

> Actually, perhaps, I dress a little better, but it's not… I mean it's not the more expensive stuff really, because when I buy something, I buy, I really look for good bargains. It's rare that I buy something at the tag price. Well, it's because I'm frugal, not a cheapskate. It's actually worth waiting because now these discounts are such that it doesn't make sense to spend money. The way my sister-in-law dresses herself, or the way she dresses her children/ These are not chain stores, but rather local stores. These stores very rarely have sales, and the prices are so, well, not very low (Małgorzata, SI).

---

[9] Polish fashion brand established after Word War II.

[10] Multi-national retail clothing chain, present in Poland since the early 2000s.

[11] Polish luxury fashion brand established in 1989.

The third, less popular option was represented by those interviewees who admitted having what can be referred to as an expensive taste. This contrasted with the taste of necessity that guided their parent's choices but also the frugality of the intelligentsia and its lack of interest in *physis*. Even these interviewees strongly stressed that they are moderate and reasonable spenders. Mikołaj, who, among others, emphasized that look was important for him but did that with a few automatic reservations, typical for intelligentsia's non-materialism. Although explicitly referring to his "luxury" shopping, he tried to emphasize the practical value of the gadgets he had bought. This complex argumentation strategy can be a form of dealing with stings of remorse associated with consumption style, which is not compatible with either old or new culture.

> I think it's also because of my wife because she somehow… I'm like… I don't need that. But for example, I wanted to have an iPhone. Well [Apple] watch, well, when she bought hers, I got a work bonus, and I'd bought one for myself too. You know, you could spend that money [in a different way], but for me, it's not… I use it [iPhone], but I don't perceive it in such terms… that I'm showing off with it. Maybe the wrong word, but I don't flaunt that I have an Apple watch, an iPhone, or a MacBook. It's not in those categories. I buy something because I want it to serve me. For example, my wife recently bought herself a Thermomix. I was very much against it because of its extravagance. Well, nearly six thousand [approx. 1500 USD]. But I look at the device and say, well, it's nice, it makes life easier, so it's also seen in other categories. Because that's what brings a change because you can, for example, refrain from buying anything and still live, so to speak, ascetically. But on the other hand, a person thinks, works… It's not to show off that I have something, but to somehow make life easier for myself, and even so, a little to tickle your ego – that I worked and I could buy it. I like this watch. Yep. (Mikołaj, SI).

Mikołaj ends this symptomatic passage with the declaration that for him, shopping was a kind of flattering practice, a reward for his hard work. This topic brings us to the complex attitude towards appearance and, in a broader perspective, possession of material goods. On the one hand, as we have seen, "elegance" is often replaced with a more relaxed attitude towards clothing as something not worth much attention. On the other hand, by choosing stylish clothing or buying gadgets, one can easily stand out from the popular classes and feel special.

Such instances of ostentatious consumption rarely appeared in the pool of interviews. For Teresa, another interviewee who does not fit into the "negligent" or "traditional intelligentsia" model, the willingness to spend money and time on their appearance was a pleasant lifestyle opportunity made possible by her mobility.

> I have perfume that cost me 500 zlotys [over 100 EUR]. My mother would never buy such perfume.
> **Because?**
> In the sense that she wouldn't even know it existed. She wouldn't be interested in it because she would feel that this is something that is not part of her world at all, in any way. And even if she knew about it, she certainly wouldn't spend so much money on perfume. And I did because I don't have children, so I have too much money (Teresa, SI).

Teresa reveals that appearance is important to her, but – similarly to Mikołaj – in another part of the interview, she will feel obliged to explain her attitude, which is unorthodox in academic circles.

> For me, for example, the way I dress is very important… To have some fashionable clothes, ones I really like. Also, recently, since I have been earning more, for example, I could buy myself things that are made of good fabrics, and I care a lot about that, and it's kind of my sense of luxury. But I also care about these things being fashionable and nice. And my parents dress aesthetically, but kind of the same for many years. I mean, my father has dressed exactly the same for many years. They change clothes less often, and my mother is also simply overweight, and she could not do anything about it, so she dresses as she can. That is, in what is available in larger sizes in a small town (Teresa, SI).

We can see that the underpinning of Teresa's narrative was clearly, not the habitus of intelligentsia analyzed so far. Teresa, being concerned about her look, was at the same time deeply convinced that the intelligentsia did not care much about dress and made it a class issue. She believed that, in her case, excessive consumption was an expression of upward social mobility and allowed her not to feel bad.

> It seems to me that, in fact, in general, there's something provincial in us [in her and her partner] a little bit. Maybe not so much provincial, but an expression of this upward mobility. In the sense of caring too much. That is, not to look bad in the city (Teresa, SI).

Her line of argumentation seems plausible, as excessive consumption can be aspirational. Even if the academic world in Poland is oftentimes post-materialistic, small accents (e.g. an expensive laptop or a piece of clothing) can reveal one's economic status. Furthermore, signaling status through consumption is easier if one also aspires to the dominant faction of the middle class. This situation is illustrated by the story of Anastazja, who argued that her metamorphosis was necessary for professional reasons: when her technical university started to collaborate closely with the industry, Anastazja became as a project leader. Thus, Anastasia's choices have been

affected by the economic field. Already during the first meeting, she seemed to be closer to the economic pole. A few months ago, she started to make more careful fashion choices, e.g., with the help of a professional stylist.

> I found that just, I was at a point when this dirty lab coat and messy hair did not fit. It didn't fit because of people… I wasn't like that. But people do pay attention to how a person looks (Anastazja, SI).

For that reason, she invested in herself and started to resemble the bourgeois middle class. Her habitus is, however, clearly cleft. When Anazstazja discusses the modest circumstances in which she grew up, and the reality of the small town, she criticizes the cult of possession, a common feature of bourgeois middle classes and some members of popular classes trying to emulate them.

> I didn't have… How would you say it? Colorful clothes, I don't know, a car, I don't drive… I don't swing around the city, so to speak, because, first of all, it never suited me. I didn't fit into this life that… But surprisingly, my friends who stayed there continue to live like that. For them, it's acceptable, all the gossip, all the fake nails… Oh, speaking of changes. These fake nails, colorful clothes, and fancy cars this is not my world. It's not my world, living this gossip, 'how much someone weighs,' 'when they gained weight,' 'when they lost weight,' 'who they dated.' And why they got divorced or why a friend's Fafik [dog] has a green collar and not a purple one. Well, sorry, it does not interest me at all. And I never fit in there (Anastazja, SI).

In this excerpt, Anastazja stands against the parochial culture of a small city's popular class, as she defies common status symbols such as "clothes" ("ciuszki") and "fancy cars." Nevertheless, her contact with the business world made her invest in clothing. As Anastazja explains, this was an investment that made her feel more confident. Thus, similarly to Małgorzata and Teresa, although she was ready to spend money on appearance, she did it with remorse and cognitive dissonance.

In all the distinguished types, the aesthetic choices associated with clothing, possessions, and home decor were clearly impacted by the intelligentsia's form of cultural capital. These choices may not, however, be considered from the pure voluntarist perspective due to the material constraints and symbolic context. Low salaries in Polish academia (Luczaj 2020a), restrained expensive choices, and the overarching narrative of the modest intelligentsia made them feel unnatural or out of place. The interesting finding is that, although the aesthetic tastes distinguished the interviewees from their parents, upwardly mobile academics do not always have the opportunity to make independent cultural choices. Especially the younger interviewees, often without permanent contracts, could not furnish their flats as they wanted to because they could not afford to buy their own place. This was clear to their friends who talked about it directly. While

these interviewees made choices concerning clothing, larger investments simply stemmed from a taste out of economic necessity. The inability to make independent choices constitutes a link between popular classes and the post-socialist professoriate, which might make them less "culturally homeless" (Friedman 2016: 15), as – in this respect – the old world resembled the new one.

Highbrow Culture

In the previous sections, we have seen that the upwardly mobile individuals were susceptible to cultural patterns dominating the academic field, as Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction predicted. Up to this point, the analysis confirms that "stratification of culture is largely based on the ability to practice and like things considered important and beneficial" in a given social milieu (Domański et al. 2021: 276). The influence of class could be traced in the realm of audio-visual culture, travel, or cuisine. It, however, should be investigated separately to what extent upward mobility is associated with the internalization of patterns of "high culture," understood as a subset of cultural activities with social legitimization, such as listening to classical music, engaging in intellectual discussions with parents, visits to museums (Bourdieu 1984; Grimes and Morris 1997: 51). In this section, I investigate if the participation in highbrow, consecrated culture is a good litmus paper for observing upward cultural mobility.

At the point of departure, in the family circles, the consumption of culture was usually limited to watching and listening to works that had no symbolic legitimacy, which is clearly visible in Cezary's interview.

> [I used to listen to] Radio Rhythm. Such a regional radio station, which, at some point, switched to disco polo,[12] but at that time, they played light pop (Cezary, SI).

Children like Cezary were not, thus, exposed to the legitimate culture at home but to various forms of popular class culture. The latter, as exemplified by disco polo, should not be confused with middle-class popular culture. These songs and tastes were considered lowbrow and often ridiculed (Luczaj 2020b). Instead of suggesting, supporting, or even imposing consecrated cultural repertoires, as many middle-class parents did, the popular-class parents adopted the "natural growth" (Lareau 2003) parenting style, which resulted in virtually no contact with legitimate practices. They allowed children to choose their leisure activities themselves and to freely play in the backyard, in many cases in a popular-class

[12] A sub-genre of disco music, often synonymous with low-brow music in Poland, preference for which is negatively correlated with education (see: Domański et al. 2021; Luczaj 2021b).

neighborhood or town. Sticking to the example of Cezary, we could observe that popular class children had a lot of spare time, even though they attended some organized activities as well.

> I came from such a neighborhood. There were probably about five or six of us, boys of similar age. We were keen on sports. (…). We played virtually non-stop. That is to say, before the serious wrist injury, I would get up in the morning. Before school, I went to the school pitch at about 6:30 to do a workout with balls. I went to school. After school, I went to volleyball training, and after training, I went back to play soccer [in the neighborhood] (Cezary, FI).

After the period of primary socialization into the popular class culture, the secondary socialization associated with gaining a professorial position resulted in the assimilation of practices closely related to "highbrow culture." When Cezary met her middle-class girlfriend, he ceased to listen to Radio Rhythm and switched to the Third program of the National Public Radio ("Trójka"), a well-reputed public broadcaster, believed to be the intelligentsia's preferred radio because of its famous shows and selection of music, including alternative and rock, being the intelligentsia music genre in Poland (Domański et al. 2021).

> You know, at our place, for example, "Trójka" was never on, because it is such a class radio, it used to be so very classed. Laura is from a "Trójka" family, you know. And with Laura, for example, I learned that there is a "The top of all times" on New Year's Day and that it's generally listened to by the whole family, right? (Cezary, SI).

Under secondary socialization pressures, the upwardly mobile interviewees changed their preferred repertoires. As a result, the list of highbrow activities in which they were engaged as university professors was rather long. Agnieszka, for instance, started buying paintings by young Polish artists, and Gosia went to various cultural events in Poland and abroad, and what is more, she tried to convince her parents to visit Polish theatres.

> When it comes to cultural events, we enjoy them basically every week. Also, we spend our time very actively. I mean, hiking in the mountains very often. By virtue of the fact that I am largely involved in the field of cultural production, well, music trips are such a norm for me. Sometimes I go to Paris to see a show. I also take my children with me, so it's just a huge change compared to what my spare time looked like when I was a child (Gosia, SI).

As I suggested in Chapter 3, the acquisition of dominant culture in the course of mobility and its consequence in the form of a "reversed transfer" is fully understandable on the grounds of social reproduction theory. What seems to be rather

unexpected, however, is that these cultural choices were selective. The interviews suggest that upwardly mobile academics in Eastern Europe did not automatically assimilate middle-class practices, unlike many early 1990s business people who instantly started to play tennis or wear fashionable Western outfits (Domke 2020). In fact, some of them openly rejected certain highbrow practices. For instance, Cezary, who – as we already know – switched to the intelligentsia's prime radio station, on the other hand, declares that he was "never bitten by the theatre bug."

> I mean, we never went to the theatre as a family. I only went a little bit with Daria [ex-girlfriend] when we started to be together because she was in a cultural studies program, so she needed to do that for school. And I'm not… I never caught it… I mean, I was never bitten by the theatre bug (Cezary, SI).

Tomek expresses a very similar opinion by stressing that not only "high" theatre was not for him but also skiing, a typical middle-class winter activity in the region he used to live in, did not seem that attractive in his view.

> [A friend told me] "Well because I was here or there at an exhibition of some kind. Or just 'We went skiing in Switzerland with a friend from high school.' It also struck me, right? Because I thought to myself… Well, I tried skiing once, but somehow I just didn't like it. I had an instructor, and I liked it, but I felt like it wasn't for me, and he was, you know, like ["why"] (Tomek, SI).

The choices of Tomek and Cezary point to a significant feature of upward mobility in contemporary Poland. Unlike the previous themes associated with the book culture, rediscovering leisure time, and enjoying the privilege to travel, the traditional highbrow culture was contested by, at least, some popular class academics. It is a clear example that every legitimization has its limits, and upwardly mobile individuals do accept every form of legitimized culture at face value. This analysis suggests that both the classical Bourdieusian category of "habitus clivé" or Jensen's (2012) terms "class crossovers," pointing to the dualities of upwardly mobile individuals, also apply to a country with less clear-cut class divisions and more egalitarian academic system. Therefore, although upward mobility could be observed through cultural choices and was associated with the process of social mobility, its role intersects with other significant factors such as age or an academic's field of expertise. That is why, even if the legitimized culture was, in general, appealing to the interviewees, they were not aspiring at all costs – their choices were largely context-dependent. Overall, the analysis shows that without taking the class dimension into account, the analysis of cultural practices loses some of its depth.

Upward Mobility and Class Dispositions. Discussion

In this final section, I summarize the previous findings presented in the form of a thick description. In this more analytical part, the stress is put on the dispositions or generative structures of practical action (Daenekindt 2017: 44) of the upwardly mobile academics. These dispositions were usually not compatible with the dispositions the interviewees acquired as children. As I oftentimes emphasized, the process of forming these dispositions is very complex because social class intersects with factors such as age or gender. For the sake of argument, these differences can be presented in the form of binaries (Metzgar 2021), indicated in Table 3 and explained below.

Table 3. Class Cultures as Binaries

Dispositions of the popular class habitus (culture of origin)	**Dispositions of the cleft academic habitus (culture of departure)**
Inbound orientation	Outbound orientation
Freedom as a realized necessity (practicality)	Freedom as a choice (disinterestedness)
Automatic transmission of consumption patterns	Selective consumption
The traditional definition of a good life	Self-created definition of a good life

Outbound versus Inbound Orientation

As we have seen while analyzing travel routines and the book culture, the upwardly mobile academics stressed – whenever they could – that their practices were "active" as opposed to the "passive" practices of their parents, epitomized by TV watching. This is a clear influence of the discourses present in the public sphere. The upwardly mobile academics were quite frequently proud of their middle-class new practices. The newly acquired economic and symbolic resources allowed them to often leave home and first-hand explore new places and countries. We have seen this "outbound" orientation, so different from the popular-class "inbound orientation," throughout this chapter. Instead of watching sports on TV, they started to practice it themselves. Instead of listening to tales and gossip about other cultures, they tried to explore them. Instead of sticking to the old menu, they discovered new dishes. The outbound orientation contrasted sharply with the inbound orientation of many popular-class homes they came from. However, it is also incompatible with what Jack Metzgar (2021: 103) refers to as central categories of working-class culture: "being and belonging" as opposed to middle-class "doing and becoming." Even if the interviewees wished to maintain

a part of their popular-class identity, they usually "modernized it." Even if their preferred cuisine was traditional, it was traditional with a modern twist. Even if the political views were religious, it was modern religiosity.

Freedom to Choose versus "Realized Necessity"

When recalling their childhood, adolescence, and early childhood in the context of their cultural preferences, the interviewees usually mentioned various necessities. Most typically, these memories were associated with wearing second-hand or homemade clothes, buying the cheapest products, and home cooking. These choices were "practical" and stemmed from necessity (Bourdieu 1984; Gdula, Lewicki, and Sadura 2014), as opposed to aimless or disinterested upper-class consumer behavior.

> But there were also moments when it was very poor. I remember that we ate, I don't know, bread with sugar, for example, And with butter, yes. With margarine, because we couldn't even afford butter. And there was misery, And really, there, somehow… You know, I don't think there was such total starvation, but well there were such very poor moments (Cezary, SI).
>
> I made sweaters for my son, and I made skirts for her. And such two-piece clothes made from wool, with different characters from cartoons. She was a little differently dressed, and the children laughed at her saying they "envied her." Cause they did not have such/ because the children teased her that she had homemade and not store-bought [clothes]. Well, they bullied her (Sabina's mother).
>
> I remember for sure as I could not afford better cigarettes, for example, so with a colleague who came from the countryside we smoked "Sport" in the beginning, that is, the worst cigarettes that were on the market (…) But I remembered this detail because, in this way, I identified myself somehow with social class, I guess (…) When I had more money, I also bought, for example, "Caro" or some other brand (Andrzej, SI).

During their childhood, the economic situation and the patterns of popular-class culture forced the interviewees to be involved in everyday chores, including cleaning and cooking.

> It was simply work. Work, sometimes meaningless, in my opinion. And it was also this studying that allowed me to get away from this work a little. And it was also such a strategy of mine, I guess, right? 'I'm studying so… [I can't work]", right? (Tomek, SI).
>
> One more thing came to my mind. When guests are supposed to come [to the family home], everything must shine, then there has to be plenty of food as if the Queen of England was coming. Such terrible tension as if someone was to come to the house so that everything looked perfect (Ewa, SI).

Nowadays, the interviewees are free from such restraints, what we have seen, for instance, during the analysis of eating habits, traveling, or clothing. Their freedom was a real possibility to make choices and not only to realize the constraints they met as working-class children, teenagers, or adults. Being a minor in a working-class family made the Hegelian-Engelsian definition of freedom (understood as an insight into necessity) often the only possible understanding of it – working-class children were often socialized to do what needed to be done and learned to accept it (cf. Streib 2011). Although we have also seen that this freedom to choose has its own limits, e.g. in the realm of home decor, the upwardly mobile academics, as adult professionals, could be more autonomous in their decisions.

Similarly, the desire to look elegant made Agnieszka's mom, according to her daughter's interpretation, simply waste time that she could spend in a better way, such as engaging in emotional or intellectual development. "Domesticity" of the parents and their preference for spending time at home resulted in the overproduction of food at Aneta's house, making time simply scarce. Many interviewees also mention the trauma of cleaning, which had to be done because that was the custom. Mobility was a kind of liberation for them. The new professional position meant that they did not have to maintain the "very high standard of cleanliness," as Agnieszka puts it, or engage in "cooking-because-I-have-to" ("gotowanie takie na muszę") as Anastazja notes.

> Compared to my mother, I'm a lazy person because my mother worked virtually all the time. I mean after work… She worked professionally and after work, of course, at home. She was constantly busy: with the laundry, ironing, cleaning, cooking. Whereas, well, I have a dishwasher, [laughs] I have an automatic washing machine. Besides, my mother did a lot of things herself, so… and I share the responsibilities at home, so well, you can't even compare (Agnieszka, SI).

It is barely a coincidence that these opinions were voiced nearly exclusively by women. In most popular-class families cleaning and cooking was an obligation of the female partners, who could count on very limited assistance from their male partners. Our interviewees were in sharp contrast with their mothers because they not only could work less (due to their class privilege) but also, oftentimes, could count on their partners, with who they shared household chores. This is how Zofia explained why she was different from her mother.

> My mother [believed that] you have to cook dinner for your husband, you have to clean. Well, you have to do these things, such classic things, that she was taught at home, that is, she was following, right? (Zofia, SI)

In contrast to cleaning, which was almost never attractive, it turned out that some daily activities, e.g. cooking and gardening, when they ceased to be necessary chores, could be very engaging, aimless, disinterested hobbies.

> You can buy everything in the store, but today I catch myself that making preserves is a pleasure in itself. It is such a stress reliever for me. Perhaps it is an activity that brings some mental comfort to me (Aneta, SI).
> Even when my parents worked – mom or dad – in their workplaces, they came home and helped my grandfather a lot. They had such a small farm, where they had some vegetables – cucumbers or tomatoes. And there you had to constantly, you know, work in the afternoons. That is no longer there. Now, when I do something in the garden, I do it for pleasure (Elżbieta, SI).

These interviewees, who started to cook in their adult lives because they liked it and not out of necessity, were eager to experiment with new tastes and styles. By doing so, they transformed an everyday chore into meaningful cultural practice. This applied to both women and men, which surprised some of their colleagues.

> It's extremely interesting because once when we were sitting with my friend Basia, Cezary, and my husband, we didn't know what to do. [Usually] these conversations about sports have just this kind of taste of vulgarity, and they [men] switched to talking about bread. And there, you can no longer throw "f-words" and other things. And they talked for an hour. We sat in such astonishment. So I have the impression that after this diet, he has more, for example, such health consciousness of what he eats (Cezary's colleague).

Summing up this disposition, upward mobility gave the interviewees larger freedom to choose their activities and allowed them to make sense of the activities they were no longer obliged to take part in. For economic reasons, they could decide whether or not they wanted to engage in certain practices, e.g. they did not have to buy the cheapest food, make their clothes, or smoke the cheapest cigarettes. Furthermore, some of them rediscovered the charm of practices they despised as children (e.g. gardening and cooking). They learned that even with moderate resources of economic capital and a high volume of cultural capital, they could turn everyday chores into their hobbies. The freedom, or "autonomy" to borrow Sennett's concept, also challenged the practical disposition, leading many popular-class people to choose practical fields of study, i.e. the ones leading to a specific profession (Wasielewski 2013: 130, see: Chapter 1).

Automatic versus Selective Consumption

As Bourdieu's theory of reproduction predicts and empirical material gathered in the course of this project confirmed, class cultures do exist. For instance, as we have seen, popular-class parents preferred a pork chop and potatoes over seafood or listened to popular radio instead of well-reputed national public radio.

They did that because they saw people around them doing exactly the same thing, which made these practices "natural" in their environment. Habits, however, may also have other sources. In addition to the inaccessibility of "highbrow" consumption patterns in social circles or the lack of sufficient cultural capital (e.g. in case of digital exclusion), the availability of cultural consumption options – in the broad sense of the term – may be very limited. These constraints may be geographic, when, for example, there may be no restaurants in the area, or all the restaurants serve fairly similar traditional dishes and material (e.g. when free TV does not offer content beyond the mainstream popular culture).

This "environmental determinism" was probably best visible in the ideological sphere. Tomek's parents and siblings adhered to traditional customs, at least partly, because they were concerned about "what people would say." The automatic adaptation of cultural practices, however, also happens in the middle and upper classes. It is not rare that a middle-class mom invests in a fancy stroller because this is what a good mom of her standing does, and a millionaire says that he has to buy a Rolls-Royce because it is a kind of "tool" millionaires need.[13] The location at the intersection of class cultures, or the state of being "culturally homeless" (Friedman 2016), allowed many interviews to be critical of both, which seems to be a clear benefit of popular-class backgrounds in middle-class academia. This disposition explains why upwardly mobile academics were very far from the middle-class willingness to look elegant and "premium," as well as other typical markers of class positions related to income levels (e.g. certain elite sports, highbrow culture), even if this kind of status signaling might be natural in their families of origin. In the process of becoming middle-class, class crossovers did not automatically accept all the consecrated practices, which manifested itself in selective consumption, allowing them to save a part of their popular-class identity. To sum up, social mobility *within post-socialist academia* allows the individual not to hide one's preferences or tastes (Lee 2017). At the same time, the selective acceptance of middle-class cultural patterns allowed the upwardly mobile individuals to make use of their social skills, which we discussed in Chapter 3, based on Bronia's thriftiness.

Traditional versus Self-Created Definition of Life Success

On many occasions, we observed that parents, and other representatives of cultures of origin, defined success in a simple, material way. They adhered to traditional beliefs, tastes, and modes of consumption, which is the result of a more automatic adaptation of cultural canons and mimicking of the dominant classes.

---

[13] This view was expressed in 2011 by Janusz Filipiak, one of the richest Poles in a press interview. Source: https://dziennikpolski24.pl/profesor-z-milionami/ar/3027954 [20.12.2022].

The upwardly mobile academics, in turn, stressed in their narratives that neither the material status symbols nor the traditional family-oriented life paths were what they cared about most. The non-materialistic vision of a successful life is implicit in many narratives, but Stanisław's colleague, with middle-class roots, made it explicit when discussing our interviewee's modes of consumption.

> Stanisław never needed money to be happy, and it was not a determinant of the paths he took in life, for which I also always held him in high regard. Because although I like to think of myself as a person who takes a similar approach in life, this is not true at all (Stanisław's colleague).

Similarly to Stanisław, Gosia believed that material goods were not important from the point of view of a person building a career in the academic field. This post-materialistic disposition was, however, very hard to understand for the popular-class parents, for who life success still had to have visible material markers.

> [My parents did not appreciate our family] due to the fact that for a very long time, we did not have these indicators of economic success. I mean, for example, we didn't have our own house. We drove… We had a Subaru Legacy and a Peugeot, but they weren't the kind of prestigious brands.
> **And for parents, these were the indicators, right?**
> Yes. So that is completely different (Gosia, SI).

What is striking in this fragment is that at least one of the brands cited by Gosia (Subaru) was actually prestigious. It turns out, however, that her parents expected a professor to drive a super-premium, ostentatious car, like a BMW or a Mercedes. At the same time, the Polish HE system is deeply rooted in the intelligentsia's values, where cultural and symbolic distinctions are more important than material distinctions, which is not the case, for instance, in materially-oriented US academia (Case 2017; Lee 2017). The material sphere is far less important in this social world, as compared to the standards of the Polish corporate world, healthcare system, or politics, being other popular avenues of social mobility. The *upwardly mobile academics* were, therefore, different not only from their popular-class parents but also from many materially-oriented members of the middle classes.

Bronia, in turn, points out that the traditional vision of family life, so close to her mother's heart, was decidedly less important for her. She recalls that her entire biographical action plan was misunderstood, not only due to the generational difference but also class-related aspirations. For her mother, upward mobility needed a confirmation in the form of material success resulting in a stable family and professional life. Without that, diplomas acquired by her daughter remained

devoid of any real value. As floating signifiers (Mehlman 1972), they were interpreted very differently by the popular-class mother and the upwardly-mobile daughter. In an uneasy moment of the interview in which she refers to "a big hole in her heart," Bronia recalls a chat with her mother just after she became a Ph.D. candidate. Knowing that the mother always valued education, it came as a huge surprise when she realized what her mother really understood as a successful career or a successful life.

> "You know what, I recently ran into Iga Kalinowska." Iga Kalinowska was a friend of mine from elementary school, such a very bad student and a terribly-behaved girl (…) We smoked cigarettes together in the third grade, but that's… That's because she was just one of those bad kids. Anyway, she told me that Iga Kalinowska had gotten married. And she was just going to have a second child. And that she works, fuck, sorry, I'm still getting emotional about it, And that she works for a local bank or something like that. And then my [mother] asked me: "And you?" You know what I mean (Bronia, SI).

The disposition to set one's goals independently from the old community beliefs, and the customs of the materially-oriented fraction of the middle class, is the last example of how upward mobility impacted the popular class habitus. As contrasted with their parents, who rather uncritically took traditional, material markers of class position for granted or valued family life above all, the interviewees often put a premium on self-development and self-created action plans (i.e. detached from the normative paths). As opposed to the "restrictive" role of working-class identity (Jones 2019) – linked to anxieties about academic abilities or capacity to cope in non-working-class settings –upward mobility resulted in what we can refer to as multiple identities. The resources acquired along with their mobility allowed the interviewees to be more independent of tradition, and for that reason, they could stop the vicious circle of social reproduction.

Conclusions

In this final chapter, I analyzed what cultural practices were associated with upward mobility. Based on the content of the core interviews as well as supplementary in-depth interviews, I identified a significant transformation of cultural consumption in the course of upward social mobility. Such a change is a consequence of every cultural contact, be it social mobility, international migration, or getting to know a new organizational culture.

The most well-grounded themes were related to the opposition between TV culture and book culture, profound ideological transformations, as well as an opportunity to make one's own decisions regarding leisure activities and traveling (the privilege of not working), food and drink preferences, or clothing styles.

In all these spheres, upward mobility made the interviewees very different from their parents and non-mobile siblings, who adhered to the old cultural patterns. Instead of focusing on particular names, brands, genres, or places, in this chapter, I analyzed only those cultural practices which could be placed in a broader biographical context. This approach enabled a detailed explanation of their sociogenesis.

Furthermore, during the analysis of these practices, four more general dispositions of upwardly mobile academics became clear: the outbound orientation (i.e. the willingness to explore the world and try new things first-hand), the entitlement to make a real choice (i.e. the abandonment of taste out of necessity for the desired practices), selective cultural consumption (i.e. the opportunity to mix and shuffle various tastes, styles, and practices), as well as the non-traditional definition of life success (e.g. the willingness to stress the intangible markers of prestige, regardless of the materialist orientation of the culture of origin and the dominant fraction of the dominant class – financial elites). These dispositions are at the heart of the individual practices discussed below.

Although other markers of class positions occurred in the narrations too, their descriptions were not saturated enough to associate them with upward mobility. For instance, a penchant for traditional Polish weddings or a preference for disco polo music, considered to be a lowbrow genre, were indicated, in various contexts, by the relatives or acquaintances of our core interviewees, but still, it was impossible to convincingly link them with the process of upward mobility. The life story interviews did not always comprise clear patterns, which can be captured in large-scale surveys. On the contrary, the detailed narratives often included the tales of cultural omnivorousness, e.g. when the brother of Cezary, who enjoyed listening to disco polo, also indicated that his upwardly mobile sibling infected him with a liking for Kazik, an alternative musician, in a country where this genre is typical for middle-classes (Domański et al. 2021). The general conclusion from this qualitative study is that class distinctions are more visible in the way how certain practices are performed rather than in the form of a list of the preferred practices. Similarly, it was not possible to verify certain observations which occurred in the collection of interviews. For example, in a few instances, the mothers of our interviewees complained that their cultural activities or international traveling were hampered by their husbands, but the empirical material does not allow me to conduct a full intersectional analysis of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, some differences between the parents' and children's cultural preferences can be attributed to the generational change. However, only some of them, because other cultural patterns were inherited solely by a sibling with lower cultural capital and not the upwardly mobile academic. Hence, even if the difference in cultural preferences was generational to some extent, it could not be

a full explanation that would satisfy a sociologist aiming to analyze the relationship between complex individual biographies and various historically changing social structures (Mills 1959). Moreover, in qualitative research, it is equally important to analyze what has been said and what has not. In this respect, it seems meaningful that the team members were unable to talk with certain parents because a few interviewees openly declared that they "would not understand" such research. Unless we assume that younger generations are more open toward social research, it is difficult to understand such declarations in a frame that has nothing to do with social class.

The discussed differences can be grouped according to two specific attitudes toward cultural heritage. The first one is a "renegade" attitude, which requires a radical breakup, known from the Western academic literature (Hurst 2012) as well as fiction and non-fiction books (Eribon 2009; Ernaux 2018). An example of this attitude is the relation to the TV culture as opposed to the book culture. Even if the interviewees did not have a strong class identity, they clearly rejected the cultural repertoires of their parents. At the same time, utilizing the term coined by Estera, these interviewees often initiate a "reversed transfer" (see: Chapter 3). This mechanism – making class-mobile academics educate their parents – found different exemplifications in the careful analysis of cultural practices. The concept of reversed transfer is useful for the purposes of social analysis of every intergenerational transfer, but in the case of upward mobility, where the difference of capitals is clearly visible, it allows us to theorize these situations when a child would take over and use their cultural knowledge to help their parents or siblings. By doing so, class crossovers build a bridge between the middle-class and working-class cultures. Thus, they do not have two identities, as typical "double agents," able to "move chameleon-like between different social groups and settings" (Hurst 2010: 5), but feel the members of the dominant classes, with a mission to have an impact on the old culture.

Another kind of relationship is associated with the process of "rediscovering the roots," introduced in Chapter 3 but analyzed further in this chapter based on the taste of traditional cuisine and organic products. This attitude should not be confused with a "loyalist" attitude known from Western scholarship (Hurst 2010) because rediscovering means that these roots were previously forgotten or repressed. This relationship is closer to the "double agents'" attitude but is not identical. As suggested in Chapter 1, in Poland and many other post-socialist countries, it is difficult to maintain loyalty to a social class whose very existence is denied by the large public, especially when a potential class identity lacks social legitimization. Moreover, the very process of upward mobility is likely to destabilize even the identity of those who felt firmly popular- or working-class in their childhood. Thus, the class crossovers in the post-socialist context rather blend a few identities than switch between them.

The Unfinished Story of Upward Mobility. The Summary of Findings

The previous chapters have emphasized the role of social class in the Polish class-blind society by reconstructing biographies leading to upward mobility (Chapter 2). Having in mind methodological limitations indicated in the introductory chapter and many parts of the analysis, this book also suggests that popular-class academics are prone to many "hidden injuries". Even if narrative interviews do not allow us to disentangle the impact of class, gender and age, they offer insight into how the social agents understood the role of these factors in their careers and suggest how those life stories (and self-reflections) can be interpreted against the body of sociological theories and research. The analysis explored how social class fosters, accelerates or enables certain career events and induces emotional states associated with crossing class lines. For instance, the Ph.D. defense is interpreted as a highly classed experience – even if it can be stressful for any academics, also those reproducing the social positions of their parents, it was the social class that shaped the way it was felt by the interviewees and externally perceived (by other agents) (see: Chapter 3). Or, political views and consumption patterns may change more significantly if one is exposed to liberal academic circles, as contrasted with a member of the same generation (e.g. a sibling) who did not experience upward mobility (see: Chapter 4). This book, thus, suggests how social class intersects with age and gender but could not even attempt to assess how "strong" its impact is. If such an assessment is possible at all, my investigation is a mere starting point for more quantitatively oriented studies to be conducted in the future.

Judging on the basis of the collected biographical material, the process of entering post-socialist academia as a popular class academic turns out to be a very different process as compared with the analogous pathway in the US, the UK, or France. In the concluding chapter, I sum up the similarities and dissimilarities between American, British, or French and post-socialist studies on upward mobility through academia. I put special emphasis on the role of the socialist past and the present semi-peripheral location of the Polish HE system in the global academic world. I conclude with a call for policy measures to prevent social inequalities in academic careers. Not having found such solutions in Poland, I suggest which Western solutions (and how) could be introduced in Poland and other post-socialist countries, or more broadly – peripheral higher education systems (to include many South American and Asian countries), and what else could be done for the working-class academics.

The study helped to identify the anatomy and physiology of upward mobility as well as their observable consequences in the cultural realms of peripheral capitalism. In Chapter 2, I discussed the conditions that facilitated upward mobility

of the interviewees. The life course perspective enabled me to look at the significant events and encounters at various stages of their lives. As suggested by this perspective, upward mobility is shaped by inner-individual factors (e.g. genetic, biological, physiological and psychological attributes), which play a role in upward mobility along with individual factors (such as socio-structural variables, education, place of living) and supra-individual circumstances (e.g. normative paths) (Bernardi, Huinink, and Settersten 2019). For instance, in that chapter, I discussed how the early discovered talent and supportive family laid grounds for further academic dispositions. Furthermore, the analysis suggested the role of many individual factors. For instance, families with "an appetite for mobility" were able to provide their children with conditions and resources to explore the academic field on their own. Some parts of the analysis suggest that such exploration, or the process of forming academic habitus, was much more difficult than usual inheritance, but at least it created an opportunity to be mobile. The story of upward mobility cannot be told without references to socio-structural factors conditioning individual action, e.g. the type of community, making urban dwellers more privileged compared to their rural counterparts. Academic dispositions were also formed by the coincidental encounters – possible in the mixed-class residential estates, or in peer groups, often outside the school environment. The contact with role models instilled in the future popular-class professors self-confidence and opened them to new career scenarios. While for many, a desired profession was for a long time a cook or a factory worker, these encounters resulted in opening up new horizons. Although school, as Bourdieu demonstrated, could be a conservative force, it was – in many cases – a liberating one. The supra-individual factors, such as the internal structure of the Polish HE system, impacted mobility, e.g. by allowing the future upwardly mobile academics to correct the "wrong" career choices. Technical and vocational schools prepared students particularly well for working-class "practicality" and resulted in deferred contact with academic culture. On the other hand, for those who had chosen *liceum ogólnokształcące*, especially an elite one in a bigger city, this decision inaugurated a lasting contact with the legitimate culture. Although, as Chapters 3 and 4 further demonstrate, while the encounter with local privileged elites was sometimes emotionally difficult, this choice usually resulted in a transformation of disposition by creating a breach with the old culture.

The physiology or the mechanisms associated with upward mobility were discussed in Chapter 3, where I argued that the sole realization of the class difference might be an emotionally charged event. The sense of not fitting in academia, deep career uncertainty, or the cultural breach resulting from losing old heritage is further emotional burden. Although some of these mechanisms can also pertain to members of the middle classes (e.g. when one learns that dispositions coined in the family of business executives are not always compatible with the world

of the intelligentsia), a meticulous analysis of the selected biographies suggest that popular class location clearly reinforces these problems, because the distance needed to be traveled was longer in their cases. For instance, although virtually no one is interested in a low salary and no one wants to have a precarious position, these general features of an academic job market affect the members of different classes to a different degree. Far less vulnerable are those who can count on family support and have a financial safety net. Similarly, learning a foreign language is always a hassle, but if one had a private tutor, attended language courses since childhood, or often visited foreign countries, their chances to have a successful academic career are much greater than those who had never been aboard. On the other hand, Chapter 3 suggests that upward mobility is everything but a linear process. In the course of mobility, some interviewees re-discovered their roots and were able to support their families. Some even started to perceive their popular-class background as an asset in the academic milieu.

The changes observed within the realm of cultural consumption (Chapter 4) fall under many categories associated with audiovisual culture, ideological sphere, traveling, or eating. Some of these differences can also be attributed to gender or age. While in most cases, it is impossible to disentangle the role played by these factors and class location, there are interpretative clues suggesting that the role of class is not marginal. First, a comparison of the lifestyles of upwardly mobile academics with the consumption patterns of their siblings clearly shows that the change is not purely generational. Furthermore, middle-class colleagues of the interviewees also pointed out social class as a factor that impacted some choices or tastes of their colleagues. Although neither siblings nor colleagues constitute a control group in a positivistic sense, this contextual knowledge makes subjective autobiographical narration more plausible. Even if this project is a non-Popperian argument, in a fashion suggested by Jean-Claude Passeron (2013) the cross-stories (Bertaux 2010) place the voice of the core interviewees in a wider perspective and make it possible to look for convergences and discrepancies. The findings of Chapter 4 were subsequently grouped into broader dispositions of upwardly mobile professors. By referring to "outbound orientation," "freedom to choose," "selective consumption," and "self-created definition of life success," I discuss crucial elements of the cleft habitus associated with upward mobility. The findings of the explorative study can be utilized as a conceptualization of indicators to be tested in a quantitative study devoted to upward mobility in academia, which will facilitate the answer to the question this study must leave without a definite conclusion: how common are these practices and life transformations in the entire upwardly mobile population, and in what configuration of social circumstances they are more likely to occur?

Although in the US, social class is referred to as "America's best kept secret" (Zweig 2000), while the UK-based researchers call it a "c-word" (Jones 2019), and the class identities may be getting weaker or more ambivalent there, social

class – outside academic debates – is still a category used in media discourse and commercial research (see: Chapter 1). Importantly, the entire American literature starting from Ryan and Sackrey's 1996 book, including Metzger's recent book (2021) emphasized *stark contrasts between working-class and middle-class culture* and their clash in the academic milieu. In the Polish post-socialist and peripheral academia, these contrasts are far less discussed but still clear. In Chapters 2–4, I presented not so much classed narratives but life narratives with *class moments* in which future university professors realized their class locations. Although the working-class label was not frequently used, class was visible in economic, social, and discursive relations (Jones 2019).

The differences between the Western (e.g. American, British, or French) academic fields, on the one hand, and the post-socialist academic fields, on the other, may be interpreted in multiple ways. First of all, it seems that the class consciousness of working-class academics in Poland is incomparably lower. As I explained in Chapter 1, due to historical factors, symbolic violence and epistemological fears, the category of social class is rather unwelcome in East Europe, despite a long tradition of higher education research focused on social class, especially among university students. At the same time, the US academics had formed an organization with a very telling name "Alliance of Working Class Academics,"[14] publish their own journal,[15] and held multiple debates concerning working-class and first-generation academics. The difference in class consciousness between post-socialist countries and the UK or the US translates, therefore, into the framing of a life-narrative concerning upward mobility through academia and the way it is depicted in academic literature.

The second point explaining why social class is experienced differently in the Western and the post-socialist context academia is that mobility in countries such as Poland was relatively easier than mobility in the US, for cultural and socio-economic reasons. In this book, I elaborated on the specific features of the post-socialist systems facilitating mobility, e.g., less elitist academic culture, the shared experience of upward mobility in the socialist period, low tuition fees for students, and unattractive salaries for the faculty. This may lead to "Normal-Miraculous" and "Non-Miraculous" careers.

Another factor explaining the weaker visibility of class differences in the post-socialist HE system is the global nature of stakes in the academic field. Since the most prestigious tokens of prestige are international (e.g. publications, foreign diplomas, research collaborations), the local power struggles are less important and, therefore, less visible.

---

[14] More information is available at: https://www.workingclassacademics.com/

[15] The Journal of Working-Class Studies: https://journals.uwyo.edu/index.php/workingclassstudies/index

At the same time, however, the peripheral position of the Polish HE system can make this mobility more difficult – as in Poland and other post-socialist peripheries, one has to master not only the local academic knowledge but also needs to have international successes. Thus, the role of cultural capital seems to be more significant here (which not everyone realizes). As Chapter 3 clearly demonstrated, the lack of foreign language skills or international/cosmopolitan capital hindered the careers of the popular-class academics, because these were inaccessible for first-generation students. On the contrary, in the centers of global knowledge production – usually – the only language that academics needs to master is their mother tongue, which, as such, is far from easy for the popular classes if we take into account class-based differences in the use of language (Bourdieu 1984; Crew 2020).

The fourth explanation, making social class less visible in East Europe is that although the academic career may be more attainable, it does not guarantee the academics an automatic promotion to the middle class ("the double-edged sword of egalitarianism," see: Chapter 1). This systemic feature makes mobility a predominantly cultural, not economic, phenomenon. Becoming a university professor clearly changes one's lifestyle (Chapter 3) but not necessarily the economic situation of that person (Chapter 4). On the contrary, the working-class siblings may have comparable life conditions (measured by their purchasing power), although they usually have very different lifestyles (measured by purchasing habits).

The fifth, complementary explanation of these differences builds on the observation that after the decades dominated by the neoliberal free-market ideology, class consciousness is just slowly recovering, as it came into the American debates in the late 1980s after the decades dominated by the "rags to riches" myth. If class consciousness only *temporarily weakened*, and the topics of class cultures were temporarily marginalized in sociological literature, they should recover, as political system ceases to be modeled on strict neoliberal assumptions (including austerity measures, lack of affirmative action, very limited social benefits), and society is fed up with the neoliberal myths. The rising number of publications concerning the people's history of Poland, and the current class divides, is the evidence supporting this hypothesis.

Towards Policies

The anatomy, physiology, and observable cultural markers of upward mobility revealed that far from being an univocally positive process, crossing class borders is associated with social suffering and emotional costs. In the current state of the academic field, it is clear that the upwardly mobile academics had to undergo metamorphoses to fit into a new environment.

It is, however, far less obvious why it is the people and not the institution that have to change. In other words, one may wonder if there is any alternative and ask how a school or university can be a more inclusive institution. The role of critical educational policy is to suggest data-driven solutions that will point to the structural basis of inequalities while avoiding the "scholastic fallacy" (i.e. analyzing higher education from the middle-class, privileged perspective, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). This is why the biographical perspective was a reasonable methodological choice. The study allowed me to suggest how educational policies can foster biographical metamorphoses at every stage of an educational career by giving voice to the people of disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the period of early socialization, when the early academic dispositions (e.g. docility towards the school institution) were being formed, one problem that stood out was the deficit of economic capital. Material inequalities are first and foremost a systemic problem, but as such, it is very difficult to target them with public policies. The elimination of systemic inequalities is probably the only solution to the problems discussed in this book. Nevertheless, such a political move seems to be far too utopian under late capitalism. Thus, I focused on policies targeting individuals crossing social distinctions and, as such, changing the system from the inside. Nevertheless, lack of state support and social assistance was not a key problem when the entire biographical narrative was considered. The sense of unfairness, even if it was implicit in the interview, was rarely voiced explicitly. One of the reasons why the interviewees rarely elaborated on this topic is that the inequalities in the Polish post-socialist social system are far less visible than in the US, where elementary school districts correspond with residential areas populated by people of different classes and ethnicities (see, e.g. Weininger and Lareau 2003: 377) and conversely, the location of school affects property prices. In contrast to that, as I already argued, in Poland (except for elite private institutions, often international, located in the biggest cities), schools are still places where preschoolers and first graders from various backgrounds can meet and mingle. This state of the field is a chance to maintain relative social diversity at the very beginning of the educational journey.

On the other hand, the study suggested that an important problem for talented children from low-cultural-capital families was the lack of role models, especially at the later stages of the educational career. To some extent, community centers and peer groups could help, which was visible in a few biographies of people who experienced the democratic transition in Poland and benefited from various state-supported institutions. Nevertheless, in the current neoliberal system, schools and institutions are less and less able to replace parents because there is a lack of systemic support for the upwardly mobile students. Thus, despite austerity measures, it is crucial to invest in science centers and community clubs also in smaller towns to provide early training in docility and academic dispositions for

the rural children, who might otherwise not get adequate exposure to those key components that could boost a potential academic career. There is also a need to support the parents of first-generation students by instilling in them the docility and academic disposition of knowledge appreciation. Although every consciousness change is very difficult, Nikolaj Grundtvig's idea of folk high school (dk. *Folkehøjskole*, pl. *uniwersytet ludowy*) seems to be a good solution (Roos M. 2022). Learning centers with a variety of subjects, no entrance exams, no final exams, and pedagogical freedom would resonate with the popular class habitus.

The transition from elementary school to high school is probably the most fragile period. While an official counseling system exists in Poland, it has proven to be ineffective (Czepiel 2013). Even if targeted programs for exceptionally talented kids, such as Polish Children's Fund (Krajowy Fundusz na Rzecz Dzieci) do exist, they provide assistance to those children who already have higher chances to pursue a successful educational career. According to the students of the compensatory advantage, "among high-performing students, social background differences in the probability of continuing to study are less pronounced compared to low-performing students" (Bernardi and Triventi 2020: 41). On the other hand, small-scale programs run by NGOs such as Akademia Przyszłości [The Future's Academy], which I know from my volunteer experience, can only support the most urgent cases of these children who need help. The average student still needs to make choices somewhat blindly, especially if there are no role models in the family nor among peer groups. A promising way to change this situation is the model of free and voluntary "community counseling" (Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat 2009) because, based on the pioneering experiences of African psychologists, it focuses on understanding the 'person-in-context' – on an individual, relationship, community, and societal level. In the case of HE, the counselor or psychologist can help the community of popular-class or first-generation students, taking the role of "advisor, facilitator, teacher/educator, mobilizer, mental health advocate, strategic advisor, project manager, researcher, community development specialist, or policy consultant" (Lazarus, Baptiste, Seedat 2009: 452). Moreover, transport-related social exclusion should be counteracted. This study suggested that in Eastern Europe, where school buses are rare, everyday commuting is an additional burden for rural and small-town high school children.

Similar measures can be adopted in the transition from high school to university, except that in this case, the role of universities should be greater. Kenneth Oldfield (2007: 4), based on autobiographical data, recalled that only as a university student did he learn the "primary purpose" of "studying literature, politics, science, art, theater, and philosophy," which was not as he expected, "employment," but preparation "for a richer existence." Such anecdotal evidence is supported by the findings of this book, which call for individual mentoring programs as well as university-wide orientation programs for first-generation students. These may

include special preparatory classes, awareness-raising training sessions similar to the programs aimed at the recognition of disabilities, or culture workshops for students, modeled on the workshops for international newcomers taking place at many Polish institutions (Luczaj and Struck-Peregonczyk 2022).

The transition from a Ph.D. student to a junior faculty member is stressful and extremely competitive for people representing not only working but also middle classes. This is a global trend underpinned by neoliberal regulations (much more visible in many countries than in Poland, where the stability of employment is still an advantage of an academic career), and micro policies do not seem to be particularly effective in this case. Career-oriented university-wide seminars can, however, familiarize popular-class students (as well as students of other social backgrounds who might also find themselves lost within the complex academic world, which results in quitting academia with a sense of wasted years) with state-of-the-art knowledge about the higher education system with special attention paid to employability and career opportunities. This, in turn, may help them make the "right choices": to properly plan doctoral studies and non-academic internships or postpone writing a Ph.D. thesis in favor of acquiring professional experience (Bathmaker, Ingram, and Waller 2013).

Last but not least, the narrations of the upwardly mobile professors also revealed a theme that exudes optimism, namely the "back to the roots" one, which calls for more media attention. Success stories of these academics who started accepting and were proud of the elements of popular-class culture, instead of rejecting it as a whole in the course of upward mobility, should gain more publicity in the form of photo exhibitions or published books based on oral histories, because they are key to the empowerment of working-class individuals. These stories need to be heard in order to be effective in fighting classism inherently integrated into the ideology of charisma and the self-made man. This book aimed to start such a debate.

REFERENCES

Acker, J. (2006). *Inequality Regimes*. Gender & Society, 441–464.

Adair, V., Brown, P. Clark, N., Perez-Cotrich R., & Stanfield S. (2007). *Poverty and Storytelling in Higher Education*. Storytelling, Self, Society, 3, 135–155.

Altreiter, C. (2021). *Drawn to work*. Journal of Education and Work 34:1, 1–13.

ARC (2021). *Kto i dlaczego nie chce się szczepić na COVID-19?* Raport ARC Rynek i Opinia, available: https://arc.com.pl/kto-i-dlaczego-nie-chce-sie-szczepic-na-covid-19/ [20.03.2022].

Archer, L., Hutchings, M., Ross A. (Eds) (2003). *Higher Education and Social Class*. Routledge.

Archer, M. (1993). *Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction: French or universal?* French Cultural Studies 4, 225–240.

Arner, L. (2021). *Degrees of Separation: Hiring Patterns and First-Generation University Students with English Doctorates in Canada*. The minnesota review, 96, 101–134.

Arum, R., Gamoran, A., Shavit, Y. (2007). *More Inclusion Than Diversion: Expansion, Differentiation, and Market Structure in Higher Education*. In: Y. Shavit, R. Arum, A. Gamoran (Eds), *Stratification in Higher Education. A Comparative Study*. Stanford University Press, 1–37.

Andrejuk, K. (2016). *Awans społeczny kobiet w czasach PRL. Dynamika struktury i sprawczości.* Przegląd Socjologiczny, 65(3), 157–179.

Atkins, L. (2017). *The odyssey: school to work transitions, serendipity and position in the field.* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38, 641–655.

Ávila Reyes, N., Navarro, F., & Tapia-Ladino, M. (2021). *"My Abilities Were Pretty Mediocre": Challenging Deficit Discourses in Expanding Higher Education Systems*. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education. Advance online publication.

Bahna, M. (2021). *The intergenerational social mobility of internationally mobile students*. Population, Space and Place; https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2425

Balockaite, R. (2009). *Can You Hear Us?: The Lower Class in Lithuanian Media and Politics*. Problems of Post-Communism, 56(1), 12–22.

Bandeira de Melo, P., Romani Campos, L.H., Zarias, A., Gonçalves Ferreira, S.L.N. (2016). *Change of habitus: The young people and the free public university in Northeast of Brazil*. Policy Futures in Education, 14(7), 956–970.

Bathmaker, A.M., Ingram, N., Waller, R. (2013). *Higher education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: recognising and playing the game*. British Journal of Sociology of Education. 34(5–6), 723–743.

Bauman, Z. (1960). *Kariera*. Warszawa.

Bauman, Z. (1982). *Memories of Class. The pre-history and after-life of class*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bauman, Z. (1996). *From pilgrim to tourist – or a short history of identity*. In: S. Hall, P. Du Gay (Eds), *Questions of cultural identity*. Los Angeles: Sage, 18–36.
Bauman, Z. (2011). *Collateral damage. Social inequalities in a global age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade*. University of Chicago Press.
Bendix, R., Lipset, S. (Eds) (1966). *Class, Status and Power. Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective*. New York: The Free Press.
Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E., Warde, A., Gayo-Cal, M., Wright. D. (2009). *Culture, Class, Distinction*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Bentley, L. (2020). *Jackie Goes Home Young Working-Class Women [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]*. University of the West of England.
Bernardi, L., Huinink, J., Settersten R. (2019). *The life course cube: A tool for studying lives*. Advances in Life Course Research 41, 1–13.
Bernardi, F., Triventi, M. (2020). *Compensatory advantage in educational transitions: Trivial or substantial? A simulated scenario analysis*. Acta Sociologica, 63(1), 40–62.
Bertaux, D. (2010). *Le récit de vie*. Paris: Armand Colin.
Binns, C. (2019). *Experiences of Academics from a Working-Class Heritage*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Binns, C. (2019). *Experiences of Academics from a Working-Class Heritage. Ghosts of Childhood Habitus*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Bothello, J., Roulet, T.J. (2019). *The imposter syndrome, or the mis-representation of self in academic life*. Journal of Management Studies, 56(4), 854–861.
Bourdieu, P. (1966/2011). *The school as a conservative force*. In: J. Eggleston (Ed.) *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 32–46.
Bourdieu, P. (1978). *Classement, déclassement, reclassement*. Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 24, 2–22.
Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The Biographical Illusion*. In: W. Hemecker, E. Saunders (Eds). *Biography in Theory*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 210–216.
Bourdieu, P. (1987). *What Makes a Social Class? On The Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups*. Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 32, 1–17.
Bourdieu, P. (1992). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Passport To Duke*. Metaphilosophy 4, 449–455.
Bourdieu, P. (1999). *How Can One Be a Sports Fan*. In: S. During (Ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge, 427–440.
Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Bourdieu, P. (2003). *Homo Academicus*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bourdieu, P. (2008). *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
Bourdieu, P. (2011). *The school as a conservative force: Scholastic and cultural. inequalities*. In: *Contemporary research in the sociology of education*, J. Eggleston (Ed.), 32–46.
Bourdieu P., Champagne P. (1992) *Les exclus de l'intérieur*. Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales. 71–92.
Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J.C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P., Passeron J.-C. (1979). *The Inheritors*. The University of Chicago Press.
Bourdieu, P. Wacquant, L. (1989). *For a socioanalysis of intellectuals: On Homo Academicus*. Berkeley Journal of Sociology 34, 1–29.
Bourdieu, P., Wacquant, L. (1990). *For a Socio-Analysis of Intellectuals*. Berkeley Journal of Sociology 24, 1–29.
Bourdieu, P. Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The University of Chicago Press.
Booth, D.E. (2021). *Post-materialism's Social Class Divide: Experiences and Life Satisfaction*. Journal of Human Values, 27, 141–160.
Brooks, D. (2000). *Bobos in paradise. The new upper class and how they got there*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Butler, J. (2021). *Legibility Zones: An Empirically-Informed Framework for Considering Unbelonging and Exclusion in Contemporary English Academia*. Social Inclusion, 9, 16–26. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i3.4074
Carles, P. (2001). *La Sociologie est un sport de combat*. Documentary film.
Case, K. (2017). *Insider Without: Journey across the Working-Class Academic Arc*. Journal of Working-Class Studies, 2(2), 16–35.
CBOS (2020). *Religijność Polaków w ostatnich 20 latach*, access: 13.01.2022, https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_063_20.PDF
Charlesworth, S., Gilfillan, P., Wilkinson, R. (2004). *Living inferiority*. British Medical Bulletin, 69, 49–60. https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldh003
Clance, P.R., & Imes, S.A. (1978). *The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women*. Psychotherapy: Theory, research & practice, 15(3), 241.
Cohen, A. (1955). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. Free Press.
Collins, P.H. (1986). *Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought*. Social Problems, 33(6), S14–S32.
Collins, R. (2000). *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Harvard University Press.
Cooley, Ch. (1922). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Scribner.
Crew, T. (2020). *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics Precarity and Diversity in Academia*. Palgrave.
Crew, T. (2021). *Navigating Academia as a Working-Class Academic*. Journal of Working-Class Studies 6, 50–64.
Crumb, L., Haskins, N., Dean, L., Avent Harris, J. (2020). *Illuminating social-class identity: The persistence of working-class African American women doctoral students*. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13(3), 215–227. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000109
Cvetičanin P., Tomić-Koludrović I., Petrić M., Zdravković Ž., Leguina A. (2021). *From occupational to existential class: How to analyze class structure in hybrid societies. The case of Serbia*. British Journal of Sociology 72, 946–973.
Czepiel, A. (2013). *Dlaczego należy zwiększyć efektywność doradztwa zawodowego w polskich szkołach? [Why should the effectiveness of vocational counseling in Polish schools be increased?]*. Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju.
Daenekindt, S. (2017). *On the structure of dispositions. Transposability of and oppositions between aesthetic dispositions*. Poetics 62, 43–52.

Daenekindt, S., & Roose H. (2013). *Cultural Chameleons: Social Mobility and Cultural Practices in the Private and the Public Sphere*. Acta Sociologica, 56, 309–24.
Davies, W. (2017). *The Limits of Neoliberalism*. SAGE.
Demeter, M. (2019). *The World-Systemic Dynamics of Knowledge Production: The Distribution of Transnational Academic Capital in the Social Sciences*. Journal of World-Systems Research, 25(1), 111–144.
Deresiewicz, W. (2017). *On Political Correctness*. The American Scholar, 86(2), 30–42.
Devine, F., Savage M. (2005). *The Cultural Turn, Sociology and Class Analysis.'* In: F. Devine, M. Savage and R. Crompton, *Rethinking Class: Culture, Identities and Lifestyle.* Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–23.
Dębska, K. (2020). *Doświadczenie awansu klasowego jako kontekst kształtowania się relacji między braćmi i siostrami*. Studia BAS 2, 111–128.
Domański, H., Karpiński, Z., Przybysz D., Straczuk, J. (2015). *Wzory jedzenia a struktura społeczna*. Warszawa: Scholar.
Domański, H., Przybysz, D., Wyrzykowska, K., Zawadzka, K. (2020). *The Homology of Musical Tastes in Poland*. Studia Socjologiczne 4, 183–211.
Domański, H. (2015). *Czy są w Polsce klasy społeczne?* Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej.
Domke, R. (2020). *Obraz intelektualisty we współczesnym dyskursie filmowym lat 1968–1990*. Dzieje najnowsze 52, 155–181.
Durst, J., Bereményi, Á. (2021). *"I Felt I Arrived Home": The Minority Trajectory of Mobility for First-in-Family Hungarian Roma Graduates*. In: Mendes, M.M., Magano, O., Toma, S. (Eds), *Social and Economic Vulnerability of Roma People*. Springer, Cham, 229–249.
Dworkin, R. (2000). *Sovereign Virtue. Cambridge*, MA: Harvard University Press.
Edwards, J.R. (1974). *Characteristics of Disadvantaged Children*. The Irish Journal of Education 8, 49–61.
Eijk, G. (2013). *Hostile to Hierarchy? Individuality, Equality and Moral Boundaries in Dutch Class Talk*. Sociology, 47, 526–541.
Eglitis, D. (2011). *Class, Culture, and Consumption: Representations of Stratification in Post-communist Latvia*. Cultural Sociology 5, 423–446.
Emery, O., Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1981). *The socialization effects of cultural role models in ontogenetic development and upward mobility*. Child Psychiatry and Human Development 12, 3–18.
Eribon, D. (2009). *Retour à reims*. Fayard.
Ernaux, A. (2018). *La place*. Gallimard.
Eurofound (2017). *Social mobility in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union*. Luxembourg.
Ferenc, M. (2012). *"Jak by to powiedzieć, to już nie moje życie jest". Relacje rodzinne osób awansujących*. In: M. Gdula, P. Sadura (Eds), *Style życia i porządek klasowy w Polsce*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 233–251.
Ferraro, A., Cerciello, M., Agovino, M., & Garofalo, A. (2021). *Do public policies reduce social exclusion?* Structural Change and Economic Dynamics, 57, 165–181.
Fortes, M. (1936). *Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process an Investigation in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*. Africa 9, 24–55.

Frank, R. (2016). *Success and Luck. Good Fortune and the Myth of Meritocracy*. Princeton University Press.
Fraser, N. (1995). *Recognition or Redistribution? A Critical Reading of Iris Young's Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Journal of Political Philosophy, 3, 166–180.
Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
Freud, S. (1962). *Civilization and its discontents. 1st American ed*. New York: WW Norto & Company.
Friedman, S. (2016). *Habitus clivé and the emotional imprint of social mobility*. The Sociological Review, 64: 1, 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12280
Galanciak, S., Siwicki, M. (2020). *„Już dość tego piękna i ciepła". Patointeligencja i jej helikopterowi*. Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze 7, 37–49.
Gallas, A. (2018). *Precarious Academic Labour in Germany*. Global Labour Journal, 9(1), 92–102.
Gallie, W.B. (1955). *Essentially Contested Concepts*. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 56, 167–198.
Gaulejac, V. (2016). *La névrose de classe. Nouvelle édition actualisée*. Éditions Payot & Rivages.
Gąsior-Niemiec, A., Glasze, G., Pütz R. (2009). *'A Glimpse over the Rising Walls: The Reflection of Post-communist Transformation in the Polish Discourse of Gated Communities.'* East European Politics & Societies 23(2), 244–265.
Gdula, M., Sadura P. (2012). *Style życia jako rywalizujące uniwersalności*. In: M. Gdula, P. Sadura (Eds), *Style życia i porządek klasowy w Polsce*. Warszawa: Scholar, 15–70.
Gdula, M., Lewicki M., Sadura, P. (2014). *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej*. Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych.
Ghodsee, K. (2005). *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism, and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*. Duke University Press.
Glaser, B. (1964). *Comparative Failure in Science*. Science 143, 1012–1012.
Goffman, E. (1986). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Simon & Schuster.
Gorman, T. (2017). *Growing up Working Class. Hidden Injuries and the Development of Angry White Men and Women*. Palgrave MacMillan.
Gorlach, K. (2005). *„Chłopi polscy na uniwersytetach" – studenci pochodzenia chłopskiego na czołowych uczelniach państwowych*. In: K. Gorlach and G. Foryś, *W obliczu zmiany: wybrane strategie działania mieszkańców polskiej wsi*. Kraków: WUJ, 215–243.
Grimes, M., Morris, J. (1997). *Caught in the Middle. Contradictions in the Lives of Sociologists from Working-Class Backgrounds*. Praeger.
Grochalska, M. (2011). *Transgresyjne trajektorie*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
Gross, F. (1938/1986). *Proletariat i kultura*. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza.
Guhlich, A. (2017). *Migration and Social Pathways. Biographies of Highly Educated People Moving East-West-East in Europe*. Barbara Budrich.
Guicheva-Gocheva, D. (2002). *Homo academicus bulgaricus*. Available: www.policy.hu/gocheva/text/homoacad.html [11.03.2022].
Harding, L. (2021, July 13–14). *Think slow. the Working Class Academics Conference 2021*, online, https://workingclass-academics.co.uk/abstracts-2021
Hartman, J. (2023). *To nie biedni walczą z bogatymi ani obrońcy przywilejów z ludźmi postępu i wolności. To walczą głupcy i nieuki z ludźmi inteligentnymi*. "Gazeta Wyborcza"

11 March 2023, accessible: https://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/7,124059,29528232,-jan-hartman-to-nie-biedni-walcza-z-bogatymi-ani-obroncy-przywilejow.html [14.09.2023].
Heffernan, T. (2022). *Bourdieu and Higher Education Life in the Modern University*. Springer.
Hermanowicz, J. (1998). *The Stars Are Not Enough: Scientists. Their Passions and Professions*. University of Chicago Press.
Hermanowicz, J. (2009). *Lives in science: How institutions affect academic careers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Hodkinson, P. (2009). *Understanding career decision-making and progression*. Career Research & Development 21, 4–17.
Hoskins, K. (2010). *The price of success? The experiences of three senior working class female academics in the UK*. Women's Studies International Forum, 33(2), 134–140.
Hurst, A. (2010). *The Burden of Academic Success*. Lexington Books.
Hurst, A. (2012). *College and the Working Class. What it Takes to make it*. Sense Publishers.
Hurst, A., Warnock, D. (2015). Les Miraculés: *"The Magical Image of the Permanent Miracle" – Constructed Narratives of Self and Mobility from Working-Class Students at an Elite College*. In: Elizabeth M. Lee and Chaise LaDousa, *College Students' Experiences of Power and Marginality*. Routledge, 102–117.
Ingram, N. (2018). *Working-Class Boys and Educational Success*. Palgrave.
Ingram, N., Abrahams, J. (2016). *Stepping outside of oneself*. In: J. Thatcher, N. Ingram, C. Burke, & J. Abrahams (Eds), *Bourdieu: The Next Generation. The development of Bourdieu's intellectual heritage in contemporary UK sociology* (140–156). Routledge.
Ingram, N., Allen, K. (2019). *'Talent-spotting' or 'social magic'? Inequality, cultural sorting and constructions of the ideal graduate in elite professions*. Sociological Review, 67(3), 723–740.
Jaquet, Ch. (2014). *Les transclasses ou la non-reproduction*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
Jałowiecki, B., Gorzelak, G. J. (2004). *Brain Drain, Brain Gain, and Mobility*. Higher Education in Europe 29(3), 299–308.
Jasiecki, K. (2018). *"Conservative modernization" and the rise of Law and Justice in Poland*. In: K. Bluhm, M. Varga (Eds), *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*. Routledge, 130–153.
Jarosz, M. (1986). *Bariery życiowe młodzieży*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza.
Jensen, B. (2012). *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America*. ILR Press.
Jensen, B. (2014). *Dreams and Nightmares: Survivor Guilt in Working Class Crossovers*. Rhizomes 17 [unpaged].
Jessoula, M., Madama, I. (2018). *Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU*. Routledge.
Jones, G. (2010). *The Embarrassment of Naturalism: Feeling Structure in Frank Norris's McTeague.* "American Studies" 1, 34–61.
Jones, L. (2019). *The "C-Word": novice teachers, class identities and class strategising*. Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 1–17.

Jones, O. (2011). *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*. Verso Books.
Kajówna, A. (1958). *Niepokojące zjawisko: zmniejsza się ilość młodzieży robotniczo-chłopskiej na wyższych uczelniach*. „Wieś Współczesna" 11.
Kemper, T. (2006). *Power and status and power-status theory of emotions*. In: J. Stets, J. Turner, (Eds), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*. Springer.
Khilji, S.E. (2021). *Lived experiences of inequalities in the USA*. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 40, 986–1012.
King, C. (2019). *Counting the Working Class for Working-Class Studies*. Journal of Working-Class Studies 4, 116–146.
King, C., McPherson, S. (2021). *Class Beyond the Classroom: Supporting working-class and firstgeneration students, faculty, and staff*. In: M. Fazio, Ch. Launius, and T. Strangleman (Eds). Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies, 91–106.
Kohn, M. (1989). *Class and conformity: A study in values*. University of Chicago Press.
Komorowska, J. (1980). *Biesiadowanie dawniej i dziś*. Przegląd Socjologiczny 32, 181–195.
Kopczyńska, E. (2021). *Jedzenie i inne rzeczy. Antropologia zmiany w systemach żywnościowych*. Kraków: WUJ.
Kosiński, K. (2008). *Historia pijaństwa w czasach PRL*. Wydawnictwo Neriton/Instytut Historii PAN.
KPMG (2022). *Social Mobility Progression Report 2022: Mind the Gap*, available: https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/uk/pdf/2022/12/social-mobility-progression-report-2022-mind-the-gap-brochure.pdf [12.01.2023].
Kraus, M., Piff, P., Keltner, D. (2011). *Social Class as Culture: The Convergence of Resources and Rank in the Social Realm*. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20(4), 246–250.
Kwieciński, Z. (1995). *Dynamika funkcjonowania szkoły*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK.
Kwiek, M. (2015a). *Międzypokoleniowa ruchliwość społeczna. Szkolnictwo wyższe a drabina edukacyjna i zawodowa w Polsce*. Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe 2, 183–213.
Kwiek, M. (2015b). *Uniwersytet w dobie przemian*. Warszawa: PWN.
Kwiek, M. (2018). *Changing European Academics*. Routledge.
Kwiek, M., Antonowicz, D. (2013). *"Academic Work, Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction."* In: *The Work Situation of the Academic Profession in Europe*, U. Teichler and E.A. Höhle (Eds), 37–54. Dordrechrt: Springer.
Lareau, A. (2002). *Invisible Inequality: social class and childrearing in black families and white families*. American Sociological Review 67, 747–776.
Lareau, A. (2003a). *Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families*. American Sociological Review, 67, 747–776
Lareau, A. (2003b). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Latour, B. (2017). *On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications, Plus More Than a Few Complications*. Logos, 27, 173–197.
Lazarus, S., Baptiste D., Seedat, M. (2009). *Community Counselling: Values and Practices*. Journal of Psychology in Africa 19, 449–454.
Lee, E. (2017). *'Where People Like Me Don't Belong': Faculty Members from Low socioeconomic-status Backgrounds*. Sociology of Education, 90(3), 197–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040717710495

Lehmann, W. (2019). *Forms of capital in working-class students' transition from University to employment*. Journal of Education and Work, 32(4), 347–359.
Leišytė, L., Deem, R., Tzanakou, Ch. (2021). *Inclusive Universities in a Globalised World*. Social Inclusion, 9, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i3.4632
Leszczyński, A. (2020). *Ludowa historia Polski [A People's History of Poland]*. W.A.B.
Li, M., Yang, R., Wu, J. (2018). *Translating transnational capital into professional development: a study of China's Thousand Youth Talents Scheme scholars*. Asia Pacific Educational Review 19, 229–239.
Loveday, V. (2018). *'Luck, chance, and happenstance? Perceptions of success and failure amongst fixed-term academic staff in UK higher education'*. British Journal of Sociology, 69, 758–775. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12307
Lubrano, A. (2005). *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*. Hoboken: Wiley.
Luczaj, K. (2020a). *Conceptualising the academic periphery*. Globalisation, Societies and Education, 18:5, 511–527.
Luczaj, K. (2020b). *Lowbrows as Rebels: Under What Circumstances a "Low" Musical Genre Can Change its Cultural Value? The Case of Disco Polo and Populism in Poland*. Social Communication, 6, 106–120.
Luczaj, K. (2021). *Overworked and Underpaid*. Higher Education Policy 35, 42–62.
Luczaj, K. (2023a). *Upwardly Mobile Biographies. An analysis of turning points in the careers of working-class faculty*. *Advances in Life Course Research*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2023.100545.
Luczaj, K. (2023b). *The Less Miraculous. Conceptualizing Social Mobility in Post-Communist Academia*. Pedagogy, Culture & Society, DOI: 10.1080/14681366.2023.2244962.
Luczaj, K., Kurek-Ochmanska, O. (2023). *Awans społeczny a relacje rodzinne w biografiach akademików z klas ludowych*. Studia Humanistyczne AGH, in press.
Luczaj, K., Struck-Peregonczyk, M. (2022). *Communicating diversity: gender, disability, race, and social class at Polish universities after 1989*. In: S. Gawroński, M. Szewczyk, Ł. Bis (Eds). *Social and marketing communication in education and didactics. International experiences.* Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Informatyki i Zarządzania, 21–36.
Luczaj, K., Dolińska, A., Kurek-Ochmanska, O. (2023). *Bookworms and Class Wormholes*. Upward Mobility, Academia and Readership in the Post-Communist Settings, in press.
Luttwak, E. (1999). *Turbo-capitalism. Winners and losers in the global economy*. HarperCollinsPublishers.
Łoś, M. (1972). *Aspiracje a środowisko*. Warszawa: PWN
Łuczaj, K., Drążczyk, A. (2023). *Post-eksperckość? Biograficzne doświadczenia młodych Polek w kontekście dekompozycji tradycyjnego wzorca inteligenta-eksperta*, w druku.
Łuczewski, M. (2003). *W stronę teorii czynników rozwoju edukacyjnego*. Unpublished MA thesis (supervisor: Antoni Sułek). University of Warsaw.
Magalhaes, A., Veiga, A. (2015). *The Narrative Approach in Higher Education Research*. In: J. Huisman, M. Tight (Eds), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (311–331). Emerald.
Manderscheid, K. (2009). *Integrating Space and Mobilities into the Analysis of Social Inequality*. Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory, 10(1), 7–27.
Marx, K. (1963). *The Poverty of Philosophy*. New York: International.

Maslen, J. (2019). *Cracking the Code: the social mobility commission and education policy discourse*. Journal of Education Policy 34, 599–612.
McArthur, J. (2021). *The Inclusive University: A Critical Theory Perspective Using a Recognition-Based Approach*. Social Inclusion, 9, 6–15.
Mckenzie, L. (2016). *Narrative, ethnography and class inequality. Taking Bourdieu into a British council estate*. In: J. Thatcher, N. Ingram, C. Burke, & J. Abrahams (Eds), *Bourdieu: The Next Generation. The development of Bourdieu's intellectual heritage in contemporary UK sociology* (25–36). Routledge.
Medina, L. (2014). *Centers and Peripheries in Knowledge Production*. Routledge.
Megoran, N., Mason, O. (2020). *Second Class Academic Citizens: The Dehumanising Effects of Casualisation in Higher Education*. London: UCU.
Mehlman, J. (1972). *The "Floating Signifier": From Lévi-Strauss to Lacan*. Yale French Studies, 48, 10–37.
Metzgar, J. (2021). *Bridging the Divide: Working-Class Culture in a Middle-Class Society*. Cornell University Press.
Mikrut, S., Luczaj, K. (2023). *Syndrom oszusta jako składowa doświadczenia awansu społecznego*. Studia Socjologiczne 2, 81–109.
Mills, C. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York.
Molęda-Zdziech, M. (2013). *Czas celebrytów. Mediatyzacja życia publicznego*. Warszawa: Diffin.
Morgan, A., Clauset, A., Larremore, D., LaBerge, N., & Galesic, M. (2021). *Socioeconomic Roots of Academic Faculty*. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/6wjxc. Preprint.
Morgan, H., Parker, A., Marturano, N. (2020). *Community-based intervention and marginalised youth: inclusion, social mobility and life-course transition*. Journal of Education and Work, 33:5–6, 327–342.
Morrison, A. (2015). *Theorising Inequality: Two-Dimensional Participatory Justice and Higher Education Research*. In: J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (257–276). Emerald.
Musílek, K., Katrňák, T. (2015). *The Notion of Social Class in Czech Political Discourse*. Czech Sociological Review, 51, 387–416.
Murjas, T. (2007). *Introduction to: Zapolska, Gabriela. The Morality of Mrs. Dulska*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
Nannini, J. (2011). *Re-introducing the Frustration into Status Frustration Theory*. A thesis Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University.
Naudet, J. (2018). *Stepping into the Elite. Trajectories of Social Achievement in India, France, and the United States*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Nawrocki, T. (2001). *Pomiędzy rodziną, szkołą i uniwersytetem: refleksje socjologa o barierach edukacyjnych na Górnym Śląsku*. In: W. Jacher (Ed.), *Eseje socjologiczne*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 121–135.
Nyiro, Z., Durst, J. (2021). *Racialisation rules: The effect of educational upward mobility on habitus*. Szociológiai Szemle (Review of Sociology) 31(3), 21–50.
Nyman, J., Schimanski, J. (2021). *Introduction: images and narratives on the border*. In: J. Schimanski and J. Nyman. *Border Images, Border Narratives. The political aesthetics of boundaries and crossings*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1–20.

Oldfield, K. (2007). *Humble and hopeful: Welcoming first-generation poor and working-class students.* About Campus, 11(6), 2–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.188

Osiński, J. (1977). *Uwarunkowania społeczno-przestrzenne selekcji młodzieży do studiów wyższych*. Warszawa: PWN.

Ost, D. (2009). *The Invisibility and Centrality of Class after Communism*. International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society 22, 497–515.

Óhidy, A. (2018). *Widening Participation in Higher Education: Policies and Outcomes in Germany.* In: S. Riddell, S. Minty, E. Weedon, S. Whittaker (Eds), *Higher Education Funding and Access in International Perspective*. Emerald, 163–183.

Padilla, A.M. (1994). *Ethnic Minority Scholars, Research, and Mentoring: Current and Future Issues*. Educational Researcher, 23(4), 24–27. https://doi.org/10.2307/1176259

Passeron, J.-C. (2013). *Sociological Reasoning: A Non-Popperian Space of Argumentation*. Oxford: The Bardwell Press.

Peterson, R., Kern, R. (1996). *Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore*. American Sociological Review, 61(5), 900–907.

Piorkowski, G.K. (1983). *Survivor guilt in the university setting*. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 61, 620–622.

Pobłocki, K. (2014). *Wódka jako forpoczta kapitalizmu: propinacja aproces klasotwórczy w perspektywie globalnej*. In: W. Dohnal, *Od etnografii wsi do etnografii współczesności*. Poznań: Instytut im. Oskara Kolberga, 139–148.

Polanska, D. (2010). *Gated Communities and the Construction of Social Class Markers in Postsocialist Societies: The Case of Poland*. Space and Culture. 13(4), 421–435.

Poleschuk, S. (2021). *Academic careers in a rapidly changing world. Biographies of academics who stayed or left Belarus after 1991. Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute.* Florence: European University Institute.

Rae, G. (2016). *Understanding The Liberal Roots Of Polish Conservatism. Social Europe*, available: https://www.socialeurope.eu/the-liberal-roots-of-polish-conservatism [11.01.2023].

Rainford, J. (2021). *How institutional doxa shapes access to higher education through framings of 'potential'*. Power and Education 13(3), 171–186.

Reay, D. (2005). *Beyond Consciousness? The Psychic Landscape of Social Class*. Sociology 39, 911–928.

Reddin, G. (2012). *"Struggles and achievements: experiences of working-class white male academics who attain tenure." [Unpublished doctoral dissertation].* University of Iowa.

Rek-Woźniak, M. (2012). *Młodzi dorośli – wzory mobilności społecznej w okresie transformacji systemowej na przykładzie mieszkańców miasta średniej wielkości*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Ricket, B., Morris, A. (2021). *'Mopping up tears in the academy' – working-class academics, belonging, and the necessity for emotional labour in UK academia*. Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 42:1, 87–101.

Riemann, G., Schütze, F. (1991). *"Trajectory" as a basic theoretical concept for analyzing suffering and disorderly social processes*. In: Maines, David R. (Ed.), *Social organization and social process: essays in honor of Anselm Strauss*. New York: de Gruyter, 333–57.

Robbins, D. (2011). *French Post-War Social Theory*. Sage.

Roos, H. (2022). *Repeated interviews with students – critical methodological points for research quality*. International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 45, 423–436.

Roos, M. (2022). *Creating Scandinavian Networks: Exposed to International Impulses*. In: *International Impact on 19th Century Norwegian Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Russo, J., Linkon, S. (2005). *What's New about New Working-Class Studies?* In: J. Russo, S. Lee Linkon (Eds). *New Working-Class Studies*. Ithaca: Cornell, 2–18.

Ryan, J., Sackrey, Ch. (1996) *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*. University Press of America.

Sauder, M. (2020). *A Sociology of Luck*. Sociological Theory, 38(3), 193–216.

Sayer, A. (2005). *The moral significance of class.* Cambridge University Press.

Scheff, T. (1990). *Microsociology. Discurse, emotion, and social structure*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Schramm, K. (2005). *Multimedia transcription of think-aloud data on the L2 reading process*. Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

Scott, P. (2016). *"Free speech" and "political correctness."* European Journal of Higher Education, 6(4), 417–420.

Sennett, R. (1998). *The Corrosion of Character. The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism (First)*. W.W. Norton.

Sennett, R. (2003). *Respect. The formation of character in an age of inequality*. London: Penguin Books.

Sennett, R. (2006). *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale UP.

Sennett, R., Cobb J. (1972/1993). *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. London: Faber. \

Siemieńska, R. (2006). *Polish universities as a place pf study and academic careers: class and gender considerations*. In: W. Allen, M. Bonous-Hammarth, R. Teranishi (Eds), *Higher education in a global society: achieving diversity, equity and excellence*. Elsevier, 51–90.

Slomczynski, K. (1989). *Social structure and mobility: Poland, Japan, and the United States.* Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences.

Smith, L.T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies (2nd ed.)*. Zed Books.

Snibbe, A.C., Markus, H.R. (2005). *You Can't Always Get What You Want: Educational Attainment, Agency, and Choice*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88(4), 703–720.

Sorokin, P. (1927). *Social mobility*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Stenning, A. (2005). *'Re-Placing Work: Economic Transformations and the Shape of a Community in Post-Socialist Poland.'* Work, Employment & Society 19(2), 235–259.

Steinmetz, G. (2004). *Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and "Small N's" in Sociology*. Sociological Theory 22(3), 371–400.

Strangelove, M. (2015). Post-TV: Piracy, Cord-Cutting, and the Future of Television.

Streib, J. (2011). *Class Reproduction by Four Year Old*. Qualitative Sociology, 34: 337–352.

Strømme, T.B. (2020). *Vocational and academic decisions in 'classed' school environments*. Journal of Education and Work, 33(3), 197–211.

Strzelecki, J. (2012). *Postfordowska narracja o pracy i jej klasowe odmiany*. In: M. Gdula, P. Sadura, *Style życia i porządek klasowy w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 87–116.
Sulima, R. (2000). *Antropologia codzienności*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.
Sułkowski, B. (1981). *Czas wolny i rozrywki „człowieka niepróżnującego"*. Przegląd Socjologiczny 33, 163–179.
Swartz, D. (2008). *Social closure in American elite higher education*. Theory and Society 37, 409–419.
Schwarz, O. (2016) *The symbolic economy of authenticity as a form of symbolic violence: the case of middle-class ethnic minorities*. Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory, 17:1, 2–19.
Szadkowski, K. (2021). *The public good and higher education in Poland. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, Advance online publication*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2021.1987194
Szelényi, I. (1982). *The intelligentsia in the class structure of state-socialist societies*. American Journal of Sociology 88, 287–326.
Świecki, A. (1975). *Oświata i szkolnictwo w XXX-leciu PRL*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza.
Tittenbrun, J. (2011). *Economy in Society: Economic Sociology Revisited*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Tomescu-Dubrow, I., Slomczynski, K., Domański, H., Dubrow, J., Sawiński Z., Przybysz D. (2018). *Dynamics of Class and Stratification in Poland (1945–2015)*. Central European University Press.
Tomusk, V. (2000). *Reproduction of the 'State Nobility' in Eastern Europe: past patterns and new practices.* British Journal of Sociology of Education, 21: 269–282.
Veblen, T. (1994). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Penguin Books.
Vertovec (2007). *Super-diversity and its implications*. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30, 1024–1054.
Wagner, A.-C. (1995). *Le jeu du national et de l'international. Les cadres étrangeres en France. Thèse pour le doctorat de sociologie*. EHESS.
Wagner, I. (2011). *Becoming Transnational Professional*. Warsaw.
Wagner, I. (2020). *Bauman: A Biography*. Polity.
Walkerdine, V. (1994). *Working class women: psychological and social aspects of survival*. Cahiers du GEDISST, 9–10, 57–80
Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., Melody, J., (2001). *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*. London: Palgrave.
Walley, Ch. (2013). *Exit Zero. Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.
Walsh, M. (2004). *Introduction to Sociology for Health Carers*. Cengage Learning.
Warczok, T., Zarycki, T. (2018). *Gra peryferyjna. Polska politologia w globalnym polu nauk społecznych*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
Warnock, D. (2014). *On the Other Side of What Tracks? The missing discussion of social class in the academy. Rhizomes 27*, accessible: http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/warnock.html [25.01.2022].
Warnock, D.M., & Hurst, A.L. (2016). *The poor kids' table*. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9(3), 261–276.

Wasielewski, K. (2013). *Młodzież wiejska na uniwersytecie*. Toruń: WN UMK.
Weininger, E.B., Lareau, A. (2003). *Translating Bourdieu into the American context: the question of social class and family-school relations*. Poetics, 31(5–6), 375–402.
Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. Sage Publications, London.
Wengraf, T., Chamberlayne, P. (2006). *Interviewing for life-histories, lived situations and personal experience: The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) Shortest Short Guide to BNIM interviewing and interpretation (version 6.8)*. [Online manual]. https://www.scribd.com/document/79633475/BNIM-Shortest-Guide.
Westover, T. (2018). *Educated: A Memoir*. New York.
Wierzbicka, A. (2015). *Żyd, Żydzi, Żydy, Żydki – stereotypes and judgments ingrained in the Polish language*. Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Linguistica 49, 57–67.
Wojnicka, K. (2020). *Sex and the Fieldwork*. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, online first.
Wright, E.O. (2000). *Class counts*. Cambridge.
Xu, C. (2020). *Tackling rural-urban inequalities through educational mobilities*. Policy Reviews in Higher Education, 4:2, 179–202.
Yosso, T. (2005). *Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. Race Ethnicity and Education,* 8:1, 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006
Zarycki, T. (2008). *Kapitał kulturowy. Inteligencja w Polsce i w Rosji*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
Zarycki, T. (2009). *The power of the intelligentsia*. Theory and Society 38, 613–648.
Zarycki, T. (2014). *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*. Routledge.
Zarycki, T., Warczok, T. (2020). *Czterdziestolatek po czterdziestu latach. Obraz lat siedemdziesiątych XX wieku czy inteligencki głos w sporze o przyszły kształt polskiego pola władzy?* Kultura i Społeczeństwo, 64(4), 41–72.
Zarycki, T., Smoczyński, R., Warczok, T. (2022). *Cultural citizenship without state: historical roots of the modern Polish citizenship model*. Theory and Society 51, 269–301.
Zawistowska, A. (2009). *Wykształcenie rodziców a kierunki studiów ich dzieci*. Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe, 1, 91–112.
Zhang, T., Brym R., Andersen, R. (2017). *Liberalism and Postmaterialism in China: The Role of Social Class and Inequality.* Chinese Sociological Review, 49, 65–87.
Zuilkowski, S., McCoy, D., Jonason C., Dowd, A. (2019). *Relationships Among Home Literacy Behaviors, Materials, Socioeconomic Status, and Early Literacy Outcomes Across 14 Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 50, 539–555.
Zweig, M. (2000). *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*. Cornell University Press.
Zysiak, A. (2016). *Punkty za pochodzenie. Powojenna modernizacja i uniwersytet w robotniczym mieście*. Nomos.
Zysiak, A. (2019a). *Hysteresis, academic biography, and political field in the People's Republic of Poland.* Theory and Society 48, 483–508.
Zysiak, A. (2019b). *Stalinism and Revolution in Universities Democratization of Higher Education from Above, 1947–1956*. Studia Litteraria et Historica 8, 1–17.

This book is devoted to upwardly mobile university lecturers or people who "escaped the collective fate of their class". The upward mobility of the academic faculty is under-researched in the peripheries of global knowledge production, although there is a significant interest in the social mobility of students. Up until now, no author has explicitly raised the question of how mobility is possible in a post-socialist higher education system, what emotional mechanisms it involves, and how mobility translates into cultural practices of upwardly mobile individuals.

LODZ UNIVERSITY PRESS

wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
(42) 665 58 63

The book is also available as an e-book

ISBN 978-83-8331-361-0