Secondary School Choice in Chile and South Africa: A Literature Review on the Orientations and Determinants of Families' Decision-making Processes in Highly Unequal and Segregated Contexts

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Abstract: Chile and South Africa introduced school choice policies as explicit efforts to create and expand educational opportunities within a market-oriented school system. This article analyses secondary school choice processes from a demand-side perspective, based on a literature review of qualitative research published during ten years (2008-2017). Additionally, the article exposes the assumptions behind the policy model regarding the chooser profile and the rationality of decision-making processes. Patterns of school choice are based on class, place of residence, race, nationality, and gender. Different social groups try to access the most valued capital in society according to their means. School choice is thus not only a struggle for the acquisition of cultural capital, but it is also a battle for symbolic capital. Specific variations in school circuits at the secondary level suggest processes of increasing segregation and intra-class divisions, as well as a unification of previously separated groups. Furthermore, the differences in which preferences of school choice are shaped in Chile and in South Africa underline the divergent entrenchment of market orientations. Although in both cases market devices, such as school choice, were successfully introduced, the legitimation of their functioning works differently according to their historical policy development, institutional arrangement, and socio-economic transformation.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, school choice has flourished across the globe (Musset 2012, OECD 2017) as a seemingly appropriate policy instrument to answer local educational challenges, such as improving the educational opportunities for students (Plank and Sykes 2003), remedying school inefficiencies, creating more educational innovation and improving the overall quality of education (Musset 2012). Education, in this context, is understood as a service that can be produced under a variety of arrangements in which the families are its natural consumers. Within school markets, school choice is oriented towards an active adjustment between educational institutions and families' preferences (Bellei 2015).

Due to that school choice policies are expected to tackle an ample variety of educational issues, their implementation has been unsurprisingly uneven. Different countries across the world have adapted, re-signified and re-contextualized these policies corresponding to their historical and socio-political contexts, producing an ample repertoire of policy designs. As comparative research has already highlighted (Plank and Sykes 2003; Forsey, Davies, and Walford 2008; Musset 2012),

their variations differ across and within countries, and over time and across regions. Having different levels of coherence among countries, this policy is not always legitimized by a neoliberal discourse (van Zanten and Kosunen 2013), making it a demanding field of study, which calls for interpretative frameworks focused on local policy contexts.

School markets, also known as quasi-markets, highlight an international shift towards the conjunction of two different institutions: market and school. Mutual exchanges have mainly characterized this shift, but it has been primarily shaped by the adoption of the market modus operandi and its terms on the schooling system (Carrasco, Falabella, and Tironi 2016).

While every school choice involves a degree of privatization due to its potential private benefits, only within a market logic are schools forced to actively adjust their supply to capture the families' preferences (Bellei 2015). The modes of this relationship may substantially change the educational processes in terms of their composition, dynamics, and orientations (ibid.). Theoretically, school choice should function towards the differentiation of schools, which have to compete for the families' preferences and are granted with a larger degree of autonomy to differentiate their educational provision. Families should have the freedom to choose the school which best fits their self-interests, necessities and expectations. The role of the state and the school should be to inform the families in due course concerning the characteristics of the educational projects, specifically their quality. As a complement, the state should set the families free from the financial constraints, which limit their choice capacity, particularly regarding poorer families (Bellei 2015). Within this framework, it is assumed that families will choose "rationally" by preferring the best schools, putting pressure on the rest to improve their supply or driving them out of the market with their "power to switch" (Chubb and Moe 1991). The more the families prioritize the academic criteria in their school selection, the better the overall performance. Thus, within this frame, it is assumed that human beings are rational and self-interested utility-maximizers (ibid.).

In contrast with this rationale, the idea underpinning this article is that the way in which "choosers" behave and decode this policy differs in relation to the ideal rationality behind the school choice model, an idea already explored by previous studies (Windle 2016; Bellei et al. 2017). Additionally, within educational markets, the historical background of educational policies, the sociocultural context in which they are implemented, as well as the associated discourse, have an influence on the variation of the households' decision-making processes on educational preferences. In this context, school choice is understood as a process and as a social practice. Thus, a sociocultural approach is used to critically address the assumptions of the rational and economic models of school choice and the associated cultural model of the choosing family. In this sense, this article positions itself with the understanding of educational choice as having an impact on the reproduction of the social structure (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Ball, Gewirtz, and Bowe 1995).

Most comparative studies on school choice have not yet analyzed this phenomenon among highly unequal and segregated countries and from the standpoint of the so-called Global South. This study aims to fill this gap in the existing literature.[2] Therefore, it has the potential to challenge assumptions about the school choice process. To this end, this article delves into the experiences of Chile and South Africa, as both countries have introduced school choice policies as explicit efforts to create or expand opportunities in education within a market-oriented school system. Both countries have a similar social background (i.e. high levels of inequality and segregation at the social and the school level) and specific market policy trajectories.

The main question relies on the orientations and determinants of families' decision-making

processes regarding secondary education in both countries. Its aim is to contribute to the knowledge about the variations and polyvalence of school choice, to comprehensively understand this policy, raise questions for future research and inform on its challenges in *southern*, highly unequal and segregated contexts. An exploratory approach is provided to analyze school choice as a process from a demand-side perspective, based on a literature review of empirical, qualitative journal articles spanning ten years (2008-2017).

The structure of this article begins with arguments for and against quasi-markets and school choice policies and with supporting evidence. Then, the socio-political contexts of Chile and South Africa are described, emphasizing quasi-markets and school choice measures along with the main outcomes. Next, the article presents the theoretical framework to observe the scope and preferences of school choices and describes the methodological approach for the literature review. The results are discussed based on the chooser profile and the main orientations, beliefs and values associated with school choice, taking into consideration its assumptions and the different circuits of schooling (i.e. socially exposed and socially restricted). To conclude, the article emphasizes the findings and implications for contextualized legitimations of quasi-market policies, the economic model of school choice and the structuring of educational preferences, and the contribution to the larger academic discussion of the field of school choice.

The Debates and Research on Quasi-markets and School Choice

School market advocates claim that relying more on market mechanisms results in better quality, more efficiency, greater innovation, increased parent involvement, and more school capacity to adjust to the demand's needs, all of which ultimately will benefit families from disadvantaged communities (Chubb and Moe 1991). Accordingly, the school markets should overcome the rigidity of the traditional state monopoly over the schools, preferably through privatization (Bellei 2015). These arguments are in alignment with neoliberal ideas of public policy, which favor market principles as a form of organizing the social life and discarding the state's interventions in people's lives. This is based on the interpretation of the shortcomings of public administration (Rizvi and Lingard 2010), thus, redefining the educational values in market terms by highlighting efficiency and liberty. It is noteworthy to point out that the existing literature shows no agreement on the exact meaning of (re)organizing the education system as a market (Bellei 2015; Bellei, Caviedes, et al. 2018), as its theory does not easily translate into the worldwide variety of schooling systems.

Overall, evidence points out that market mechanisms have small effects on educational outcomes (if any); moreover, results are presented as fragmented and often inconclusive (Waslander, van der Weide, and Pater 2010). Ladd (2002) concluded that the potential gains in student achievements are most likely to be small, in the best of cases. Regarding voucher mechanisms, Rouse and Barrow (2009) indicate quite small gains in achievements for students and some of them are not statistically significant. Most of the evidence reveals a risk of increased segregation, and no clear tendency or conclusive results on productivity or technical efficiency (i.e. the costs of choice regimes), since it might increase or decrease (Waslander, van der Weide, and Pater 2010). Innovation has not been widely studied, but it seems unlikely that it should be an outcome of market policies (ibid.). Some studies concluded that innovation in the classroom cannot be causally related to market-oriented policies, but rather seems connected to government interventions on pedagogy and curricula innovation (Lubienski 2009). Overall, findings indicate differential effects,

as some learners and schools might experience modest positive effects under a market-oriented system, while others experience the opposite (Waslander, van der Weide, and Pater 2010).

The wide range of possibilities for choosing a school is a market-oriented policy aimed at broadening the educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged learners (Moe 2002). However, its critics point out that school choice is rather associated with increases in sorting students based on their socio-economic status, ethnicity, and ability, which increases the segregation of students across schools (OECD 2010; 2014; Musset 2012), instead of improving school achievement (Ball 2003, Bosetti 2004). This reinforces socio-economic inequality and lessens the possibilities of equality in educational opportunities. In this sense, it is interpreted as a strategy of class reproduction to ensure relative advantage, social advancement and social mobility (ibid.), because it further benefits those who are already in an advantaged position in life.

However, it is difficult to disentangle the extent to which segregation between schools segregation is the cause or the result of larger patterns of social segregation, particularly in terms of residence, due to that schools are entangled with matters of physical space such as school zones, districts and addresses (Rowe and Lubienski 2017). Literature on the subject also emphasizes that school choice reduces the unique potential of schools as sites of social cohesion, as they are more segregated by their student features (Musset 2012). Studies have investigated the individualization of the choices' risks and the growing responsibility of the families, highlighting the increasing uncertainty and anxiety linked to the lack of institutional and social support, especially within the middle sectors (Ball 2003).

Authors also have shown concern about the incentives introduced to pick out high achieving learners at the expense of the disadvantaged and low-performing students, who will remain at their low-performing and segregated neighborhood schools (Alves et al. 2015). Most empirical literature on school choice agrees that poorer households are less likely than middle-class families to participate in school choice dynamics (Saporito and Lareau 1999). School choice appears less controlled and more constrained for them, due to having less opportunities and resources. Their choices are marked by non-academic factors, such as the proximity of the schools, the provision of extracurricular activities and the school infrastructure (Bellei, Caviedes, et al. 2018). Some authors argue that they will not have the information or the time to make informed decisions by choosing a good-quality school (Teske and Schneider 2001), while others have interpreted them as "non-choosers" or disconnected from the market (Bernal 2005). In contrast, others have underlined their rationality by eluding high risk decisions through making pragmatic choices (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1996).

Conversely, the upper class seems less affected by school choice policies, inasmuch as they already occupy the most privileged social positions (Van Zanten and Maxwell 2015). Notably, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data, whilst parents from all socio-economic backgrounds consider academic achievement as a relevant dimension when choosing a school, socio-economically advantaged parents are more likely to consider it as "very important" (OECD 2010).

Other key factors in school choice are language, race, and ethnicity. The last two, often entangled with class dynamics, are especially critical in countries with historical tensions among their heterogeneous ethnic composition or with recent processes of international human mobility (Bellei, Caviedes, et al. 2018). The cultural segregation associated with language is particularly significant in multicultural societies and cosmopolitan cities, often reproducing ethnolinguistic

hierarchies (ibid.).

Research in Chile and South Africa has demonstrated a close connection between school choice and class structure, along with its linkages with a profound restructuring of the educational systems and the re-shaping of middle classes (Tikly and Mabogoane 1997; Hoadley 1998; Maile 2004; Elacqua 2012; Poblete and Madsen 2013; Cavieres 2014; Bellei 2015; Bellei, Caviedes, et al. 2018). Empirical reviews comparing both countries have not yet been conducted. Rather, comparisons of countries with different social, political and economic resources, levels of equality, and accessibility in their school systems have been studied.[3]

Towards an Understanding of School Choice as a Process and a Social Practice

Two key assumptions of the school choice model are the reductive economic idea of decision-making with a rational cost-benefit analysis (based on hard evidence of school effectiveness), and the contracted cultural idea behind the nuclear family. Making sense of school choice processes from a demand-side perspective involves taking both into account, as well as unfolding a theoretical approach in order to understand it as a complex social practice from a social approach. This approach allows for the vision of school choice as an expression of unequal distribution of social positions, closely tied to a cultural, historical and social context.

A social approach to school choice does not deny the existence of instrumental views and the economic cost-benefit analysis in families, it rather considers these views as part of a larger social arrangement (Bellei 2015; Bellei, Caviedes, et al. 2018). It emphasizes its relational character as a social practice (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995), enabling it to determine the agents' motivations and to understand their rationality. School choice as a process situates preferences at the center of the dynamics mobilizing educational systems. In this frame, the construction of school preferences as a relational practice is necessarily social, local and contingent (Carrasco, Falabella, and Tironi 2016).

Family organization play a central role in public policies, often anchored in an implicit, specific cultural type (Jelin 2005). Despite the crucial and apparently universal nature of the family as a social institution, there is no uniform definition of it. While family refers to the ties of kinship between its members (filiation, consanguinity and alliance), the household is generally associated with sharing residence, and with persons benefiting from the same food budget. As a social institution, family involves patterns of intergenerational transmission of social, cultural, and economic capital. In the modern western paradigm, the social expectation is that family ties are based on affection and mutual care. They also incorporate instrumental, strategic and interest-based considerations in the short and longer-term intergenerational perspective (Jelin 2005).

The school choice model, as a part of the neoliberal imaginary, has been mainly based and designed to speak to a narrow understanding of families; and it is not exempted from cultural dispositions towards the chooser and how he or she (or a set of persons) make a choice. It assumes a cultural ideal of the student and the families, based on an economic model of an ideal of a white and Western economic man (Windle 2016). This notion excludes children, as they do not have public autonomy, rights, or interests (Friedman 1955), since these are established by the family. It does not consider women as autonomous individuals, because they are subsumed within the family and they do not have a property to exchange. A male patriarch is the head of the family

-a heterosexual nuclear family- with a wife and children as his dependents, whose role is to satisfy their needs. Despite the potentially conflicting needs within the family, the breadwinner male makes decisions in a dispassionate and rational manner, seeking the best interests of the family as a whole (Strassman, 1993; in Windle 2016). In this family model, the public sphere involves the man making decisions regarding education for the family, while the private sphere entails (unpaid) caring and affective labor, the predominant sphere for women.

This chooser appears as universal, acting regardless of his particular circumstances, only considering the current economic conditions, implying neutrality towards race, gender and class (Apple and Pedroni, 2005; in Ndimande 2009). The subsequent narrow-minded perspective in educational policies and denial of wider issues such as inequality has been criticized (Gillborn 2001).

The Social Restriction Logic and the Circuits of Schooling

Two key approaches to interpreting school choice processes have been considered. The first draws upon the concepts of *socially restricted* and *socially exposed* sites (Windle 2016). The second is the *circuits of schooling* (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995), based on Bourdieu's analysis of education as a strategy of social reproduction.

Socially restricted sites and *socially exposed sites* are two opposite poles functioning within a dynamic of social restriction. Schools are positioned in relation to these two poles, with the school choice as an expression of the logic of social restriction. Only a limited number of schools have a level of demand that enables them to pick and choose to become "schools of choice" (Windle 2016). These schools – characterized by a greater selectivity – are successful when operating as *socially restricted sites*, while the rest works as *socially exposed sites* (ibid.).

In this frame, school choice policies take the socially restrictive schools as the model that must be followed by the school system. Within the logic of social restriction, schools are subjected to a curriculum and examination system that only operates effectively under conditions of social and academic selection, and the favorable outcomes of selective sites enable them to establish the standards to be met (Windle 2016). It also entails a cultural dimension defined by the habitus of the ruling class, and as a cultural model, it is not neutral in assessing quality. The families sending children to socially restrictive schools are those who provide the cultural ideal against which others are judged, valued and eventually excluded (Windle 2016).

Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1995) established that relationships between choice and market are local and specific. They found differentiated *circuits of schooling* in the educational market within the same local space, highlighting the differentiated nature of schooling mobility. Circuits of schooling relate to class, choice and space in a different manner (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995). The priorities and possibilities of choice are significantly distinct for choosers from different social classes, as choice fits into their lives and life plans in a variety of ways. The circuits of schooling describe and interpret the interaction and relationship between certain types of families and schools (van Zanten and Kosunen 2013). The role of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1985) is crucial to encoding and decoding the knowledge of schools, along with being a useful resource to make judgements and decisions in educational markets (van Zanten and Kosunen 2013). The prestige associated with a certain school might be translated into symbolic capital – as a legitimized and recognized form of the other capitals – , and functions by highlighting its reputation along with

its value within a circuit of schooling. Capital endowments are internalized and fundamental to the habitus (Bourdieu 1977), which is embodied and realized in multiple school practices.

Related to the socially restrictive regime, circuits of schooling, particularly socially restricted sites, serve as a confined social base of students, obtaining legitimacy as a model of school for the rest of the school system through school choice. Yet, this notion of circuits of schooling does not explicitly consider the role of race as a relevant aspect in tracing school pathways. For the analysis in this article, race has been included as a fourth element. Thus, here circuits of schooling relate to class, choice, space and race in a different manner.

Educational and Public Policy Trajectories in Chile and South Africa

Chile: the Explicit Establishment of a Quasi-market

Chile is a unique and radical example of a "market experiment" that was accelerated, extensive, and sustained over time. The dictatorship (1973-1990) implemented a nationwide educational reform that greatly modified defining features of the education system, replacing the former notion of "the state as an educator" with a quasi-market. Its remarkable characteristics included decentralization, privatization, the introduction of a voucher program for both private and public schools, and an assessment and information system on academic performance (i.e. the Education Quality Measurement System; the SIMCE). In this frame, schools must compete to win the families' preferences, who constantly receive information and different incentives from SIMCE results. This reform resulted in a systematic increase of private provision (22% of enrollment in 1980; 38% in 1990; and 63% in 2017), a dramatic decrease of enrollment in public schools (amounted to 78% in 1981; 58% in 1990; and 36% in 2017) and, consequently, a crisis in their economic viability (Castro 2013; Bellei, Contreras, et al. 2018; Bellei, Muñoz, et al. 2018).

This reform was not reversed after the return to democracy. The Law of Shared Financing (1993) deepened the quasi-market, allowing subsidized-private schools to ask families for school fees without removing their allocated state subsidy (i.e. voucher). Standards-based reforms in education were established with a strong focus of accountability and rewarding schemes grounded on academic performance assessed by highly specialized national agencies. Student selection practices were the norm and continued unregulated until 2009, when the General Education Law prohibited subsidized-private schools from selecting students up to the sixth grade. However, subsidized-private schools continued with the selection practices, mostly based on academic and financing criteria (Contreras, Sepúlveda, and Bustos 2010), whereas the public schools mostly remained free with an open enrollment policy. An exceptional case within the public schools are the "emblematic schools" (Quaresma 2017) or elite public schools well-known by their academic selectivity, high-academic performance in standardized tests, and involvement in social issues (e.g. nationwide students' movements such as the "Penguin Revolution" in 2006).[4]

After more than three decades of this quasi-market model, most evidence suggests that school choice has greatly incremented the stratification and socio-economic segregation among schools (Elacqua 2012; Bellei 2015). The non-subsidized private schools are made up of almost exclusively upper-class families, while the public schools are comprised of mainly lower and middle-lower-class families. The subsidized-private schools are mostly attended by middle-class families (Elacqua

2012). The effects on the improvement of the quality of outcomes through educational achievement, are either not statistically significant, or remain inconclusive (Gauri 1999). On average, public schools perform worse than the subsidized-private sector, a difference that disappears when controlling for the socio-economic characteristics of students (Raczynski 2010; Mizala and Torche 2012). The analysis of school segregation signalizes different influencing elements, such as the institutional design (e.g. the fee-paying schools) (Mizala and Torche 2012), the families' preferences for a specific type of school, and residential segregation levels (Elacqua and Santos 2013; Valenzuela, Bellei, and de los Ríos 2014). Although residential segregation often partly explains school segregation, research on Chile suggests that social segregation in schools is significantly higher than residential segregation (Valenzuela, Bellei, and de los Ríos 2014; Valenzuela and Montecinos 2017), while academic segregation between schools is especially high in secondary education (Valenzuela, Bellei, and de los Ríos 2014; Villalobos and Valenzuela 2012).

After the Penguin Revolution, a period of educational reforms arose aimed at improving educational quality, rolling back the decline in public schools' enrollment and reverting the inequitable distribution of learning opportunities and school segregation. It started with a voucher for the most vulnerable pupils through the Preferential School Subsidy Law (2008), followed by the School Inclusion Law (2016) and the new Admission System, the National System for Teachers' Professional Development Law (2017) and the New Public Education Law (2018) (Valenzuela and Montecinos 2017; Bellei, Muñoz, et al. 2018). However, the future interaction of these recent laws is uncertain (Valenzuela and Montecinos 2017). Although these reforms seem an opportunity to lead towards a substantial transformation of Chilean education, a greater and broader impulse is required – one that would stop conceiving the educational system as a market and public education as one more competing provider.

South Africa: Towards an "Unintended" School Choice

Education was key for Apartheid to segregate racial groups and maintain the white minority ruling the country, as most disadvantaged students, notably black students, faced tightly limited housing and school choices. The state provision of education was separated into 19 different education authorities differentiated by geography and population group, as well as their allocated resources and the quality of the delivered services. Overall, black schools were significantly under-funded compared with white schools that received five times more funding. The Apartheid ended the largely predominant tradition of English as the medium of instruction among mission schools for African students, forcing learners into an "ethnic straight-jacket" (Hunter 2015b) by fostering, and at the same time undervaluing, African languages as a medium of instruction. The Bantu Education Act, the People Registration Act, and the Group Areas Act were the legal instruments whereby the Apartheid organized and legalized the discrimination and deprivation of the black majority, working to segregate them and enabling white dominance (Maile 2004).

The desegregation through deracialization began slightly in the early seventies for formerly white schools (Christie 1995; Hunter 2016). Before the political transition, all schools serving mostly white students turned into state-aided schools, with white parents making decisions about these schools' finances, admissions and property. This early step was key to the preservation of white hegemony over the forthcoming transition (Christie and McKinney 2017).

After the Apartheid, the open enrollment policy through the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) in 1996 and the elimination of race-based allocation of educational resources had a deep

impact in restructuring the school system (Woolman and Fleisch 2006a; 2006b). NEPA gives enrollment priority to children whose parents live and work within the school's feeder zone. Then if the school is not at its full capacity, any other child may enroll, regardless of his or her parental domicile or employment location.

In addition, the racial segregation among different educational departments was changed, while community participation was fostered through the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) defined by the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996. Through SGBs, school communities have enough autonomy to self-govern, establishing fees and admission requirements (e.g. language skills). Although the post-Apartheid constitution recognizes eleven languages, the lack of active promotion of African languages has maintained the dominance of English as medium of instruction (Gilmartin 2004).

As SASA allowed the introduction of agreed fees when SGBs so decided, it made schools responsible for supplementing the in most cases insufficient state funds in public schools. A fee-exemption rule was established in 1998 for parents providing proof of being low-income. Furthermore, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (1998) endowed a per capita learner spending to redirect state resources to the most disadvantaged learners and to avoid the "flight" of the most privileged students from the public system (e.g. white and black middle classes). In 1998, the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) supported the competition for learners, by linking their numbers to teaching posts granted to the school (Woolman and Fleisch 2006a; 2006b). SASA was amended in 2005 to introduce a quintile funding system between grades R to 9, categorizing schools based on their feeder zone's relative wealth, establishing that quintiles 1 to 3, later known as *no-fee schools*, were not allowed to charge fees, although they could *voluntarily* raise additional funds. In 2011, the no-fee schools represented roughly 84% out of the total amount of public schools in South Africa.

A list of no-fee-paying schools is published by the Ministry of Basic Education and since 1999, public reports of passing rates by school level are available (Hunter 2015b). The latter, along with the matriculation exam, a secondary school certificate, are key instruments to measure academic performance with high impact on the future schooling trajectories.

The interaction of these laws created a conflicting scenario. While NEPA anticipated that families would choose schools outside their feeder zone, it also allowed for non-domicile learners to be prevented from going to the school of his or her choice. Families entitled to fee-exemption are either strongly discouraged to seek admittance or coerced into paying school fees (Veriava, Thom, and Hodgson 2017). With SASA, the lack of clarity about who decides on school admissions policies resulted in the SGBs making the final decisions. Moreover, SASA created the incentive to admit as many full fee-paying learners as possible (Woolman and Fleisch 2006a, b), while EEA foster competition between schools for learners. Thus, Woolman and Fleisch (2006a) argue that a *de facto* school choice policy emerged as an unintentional consequence of state policy trying to dismantle the old administrative school system and re-distribute the power. Yet, they also claim the state was aware of the possible unintended consequences created by these policies (Woolman and Fleisch 2006a).

As result, the fees policies and the limited deracialization of a small group of private independent and privileged public schools have stressed class differences (Soudien and Sayed 2004). Although evidence indicates a significant reduction in the quantitative educational attainment differentials among racialized groups after the transition, the qualitative differences still endure

(Van der Berg 2007). The racial composition of schools remain the most prevalent determinant of outcomes in matriculation and passing rates, in addition to socio-economic background and educational inputs (Van der Berg 2002). Among black students, educational inequality seems to correspond to income levels, which is an ever growing measurement of social stratification (Spaull 2015; SAHRC and UNICEF 2014).

Against this backdrop, authors raise the idea of a two-tier or "bifurcated" school system: one is functional and wealthy, and the other dysfunctional and poor (Hoadley 1998; Spaull 2012), while both have very few sociocultural elements in common (Spaull 2012). The first system caters to a 'multiracial' minority (mostly made up of white students) who are able to attend independent private elitist or privileged state schools in middle-class suburbs. The second system caters to the black African majority in public schools, ones that are highly deprived of economic resources and educational quality and are located in working-class areas. The latter has allowed for middle- and lower middle-class black African, colored and Indian students to enroll in the formerly white schools, which are located on the limits of the former Group Areas.[5] A middle class has surfaced as a heterogeneous and racially segmented group with diverse aspirations, tensions and contradictions. The most affected are township and rural schools that are overcrowded and resource-deprived compared to those serving well-off communities (Maile 2004).

Despite more than two decades of reforms, deracialization has not ended segregation. The logic has shifted, but the schooling system remains unequal and segregated along socio-economic and racial lines. However, evidence indicates that school desegregation is moving faster than residential desegregation, with aspiring middle-class parents encouraging an enormous movement of children for schooling across space. Hunter (2010) describes this as part of a "class project" towards potential social mobility. Similarly, Fataar (2009) highlights the rise of a "school choice displacement", or a preference to choose a school less close to home.

Methodological Approach

As the principal approach of data collection, a literature review has been conducted to find and retrieve meaningful information from selected studies and to identify and synthesize the available research findings. An explicit search method with a set of criteria was used to find the literature and to reduce both selection and interpretation bias. The search was undertaken between November 2016 and August 2017, and last checked for accuracy in November 2018. The focus was on empirical qualitative studies of school choice policies. The search protocol included keywords, titles and abstracts of articles published in relevant bibliographic databases during the specific period (2008-2017).[6] Education subject heading terms (EdSH) were used when available and free-text keywords were used when appropriate. Additionally, a review of the references from previously identified relevant articles and a manual search for articles of key authors in the field was undertaken.

Study Selection Criteria and Procedures

The following inclusion criteria guided the articles' selection process. First, only journal articles were considered. Secondly, the articles were specifically published in scientific journals between 2008 and 2017. Thirdly, only qualitative empirical studies were considered, though mixed methods articles were included if they used a qualitative approach. Fourthly, the articles tackled

decision-making processes of secondary school choice, regardless of whether they referred to private, semi-private or public schools. Thus, studies with families who had at least one child attending school a year before the transition to secondary education qualified as part of the sample. In fifth place, articles investigated school choice as a process either explicitly or implicitly, following the definition used in this research with focus on decision-making processes. More precisely, they delved into how families structured their school preferences. In sixth place, the articles analyzed the demand-side perspective of school choice (i.e. the students, families, households, parents and guardians' points of view). In seventh place, the articles were written either in English or in Spanish.

The following exclusion criteria guided the selection process. First, book chapters, research reports and conference papers were excluded. Secondly, empirical and well-documented evidence was given precedence over conceptual papers and investigations that only used secondary data as their information sources. Thirdly, studies that did not address secondary school choice were not considered in the final sample. Fourthly, articles that only considered the school perspective or only addressed regulatory or law-making processes were excluded. In fifth place, articles primarily focused on school choice criteria, regardless of whether they were hierarchized or quantified, were excluded.

The literature selection process included the following stages. First, the identification of 123 records. Secondly, and after removing duplicates, the screening of 115 records. Thirdly, the eligibility assessment of thirty-five full-text articles. Lastly, the search resulted in a total of fourteen articles for the qualitative analysis.[7] It is worth nothing that most of the selected articles addressed both primary and secondary education. Thus, unless differences between primary and secondary school choice were explicitly stated, the articles' findings were considered equally valid for both levels.

Summary and Discussion of Results

Overall, the review shows that some sectors of the middle classes in both countries are in a more advantageous position to benefit from school choice and are more likely to develop strategies to secure their privileged position or social advancement. However, their chance for social mobility is limited, sometimes resulting in great social, cultural and economic costs, as observed in the South African case. Furthermore, the strategies of the middle classes differ for both countries. Whereas the Chilean middle classes are oriented towards the consolidation of their recently acquired social position, the South African middle classes, particularly black Africans, are actively searching for class mobility by improving their employability through education. The lower classes in both countries benefit the least from school choice and usually experience the process with frustration, uneasiness and anxiety (Ndimande 2009; Msila 2009; 2011; Bellei et al. 2017). Some lower-class families manage to improve their precarious situation slightly, while others show a certain level of confidence in the schooling system and in the offered meritocratic options of social mobility.

The results challenge the main assumptions of the market model of school choice. First, they do not support the economic model of the decision-making process as a rational cost-benefit analysis (Chubb and Moe 1991). Secondly, the results expose the inadequacy of the ideas of a nuclear family with a male head of household as the breadwinner, especially in the South African case, as well as of a universal chooser who acts regardless of particular circumstances (i.e. race, gender,

class, space). Conversely, results support the idea that dynamics and orientations towards school choice are tightly intertwined with race, gender, class and space. Furthermore, they are linked to both countries' policy trajectories and closely connected with their educational institutional arrangements.

For both countries, results dismiss the notion that school choice policies help to overcome social inequalities through education by broadening the educational opportunities of the most disadvantaged learners. Nor do they support the idea that school choice diminishes school segregation. Instead, the studies reveal how families, by exercising school choice, are actively producing and reproducing inequalities through social segregation and social closure. Furthermore, results suggest that school choice, in spite of some exceptional cases such as multiracial and multicultural schools, reduces the potential of schools to promote social cohesion, as suggested by previous research (Musset 2012). Beyond these global results, the specific manifestations of school choice dynamics in both countries underline the significance of different local adaptations and interpretations.

The Regulatory Guaranties for School Shoice and Sources of Information

The policy frameworks for school choice in both countries, along with the official institutional information provided to those who choose, do not enable families to exercise their choice equally and freely according to their self-interests, necessities and expectations. Economic, symbolic, cultural, and social capitals are fundamental to advantageously navigate through the schooling system. Regardless of the institutional arrangements in both countries, the possibilities of different groups making choices in accordance with their desires are as unevenly distributed as the aforementioned capitals.

The instruments assessing the quality of educational providers on a regular basis, which allegedly provide the required information for rational choices, play a different role in each case. In Chile, the informed academic performance of schools is mostly omitted in the school choice process other than in exceptional cases (i.e. the emblematic schools). In South Africa, information regarding high-performing township schools is relevant in decision-making processes and carries greater weight for black Africans living in townships. However, information about the academic performance of schools end up positively affecting only a small number of learners and families due to the high selectivity of these schools. Notably, studies show how the academic results of South African highly prestigious suburban schools are a consequence of the schools' concentration of wealthy families, the competition for resources, and the pace of desegregation among suburban schools, rather than an indicator of educational quality (Hunter 2015b). In this context, the 'objective' basis of educational quality masks the movement of certain types of families and their varied resources and capitals.

In both countries, economic capital is critical for accessing one's desired school. In South Africa, symbolic, cultural and social capital also play a crucial role. In fact, whiteness is an advantage for those seeking access to prestigious, better funded and high-performing suburban schools. Certain knowledge (such as English skills, awareness about the education regulatory system or having professional training), along with previous experiences navigating the schooling system, might tip the scales in the favor of a family choosing a better school. Lastly, the high amount of school fees ensures school boundaries that allow for the development of exclusive social networks.

In Chile, economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals are also relevant in shaping school choice patterns. The relevance of knowledge about the functioning of the school system is certainly an advantage for locals, but not for migrant families. Paying school fees, even if the amount is low, presents a major challenge for poor families. Additionally, school selectivity ensures enclosed socially homogeneous places, enabling the growth of distinctive social networks.

The Rationality of Choice: Purposes and Orientations

The main assumption behind school choice is that families choose rationally, prefer the best schools, and therefore, boost the quality and efficiency of the entire educational supply with their power to switch schools (Chubb and Moe 1991). Competition among schools to improve their quality of educational provision should therefore theoretically increase, as well as the innovation and institutional diversification.

Although academic performance appears to be a more important choice criterion for some groups in South Africa than in Chile, the analysis of both countries provides little support for the argument that most families are basing their choice on rational cost-benefit thinking based on hard evidence of educational quality. While national systems of information provide results of academic performance at the school level on a regular basis in both countries (i.e. the System of Quality Measurement in Education or SIMCE, by its acronym in Chile, and matriculation and passing rates in South Africa), this information does not nurture a virtuous circle of general educational improvement. High-performing schools in both countries seem to work mostly with selection mechanisms and appeal to certain socio-economic groups. Thus, the global impact of academic information is rather symbolic, as it does not trigger quality education in the schooling systems at large. Competition among schools, when reported, is not oriented towards increasing quality, but rather, towards the acquisition of resources and the maintenance of a school's reputation. Quality improvement is an unintended consequence, rather than objective, of school competition. Schools instead are seeking to corner the market of economic resources and prestige. Innovation was neither reported, nor was it within the objectives of the selected studies. Institutional diversification, though present in both countries, does not follow pedagogical criteria.

Thus, if quality based on evidence of academic performance is not the main criterion for school choice, what is then? In Chile, school choices seem to be oriented towards different purposes, such as accessing non-precarious segments of the labor market (ideally in an advantageous manner). Additionally, they seem to be made for gaining symbolic, social, and cultural acceptance, to exclude people considered risky and marginalized and towards social reproduction or consolidation of a social position. Finding a favorable and stable position in the labor market is particularly relevant for the lower classes, as is expressed in their curricular preferences, namely, vocational schools (Bellei et al. 2017). School choice as a social exclusionary strategy emerges predominantly among middle-class sectors, for both Chileans and migrant families (Canales, Bellei, and Orellana 2016; Hernández and Raczynski 2015; Joiko and Vásquez 2016). It is also present in a lower-class group, namely, the *uneasy strugglers* (Bellei et al. 2017). Families in this group are struggling at the bottom of the school market and want to provide their children with environments for socialization that protect them from the dangers of marginalization, and thereby push them towards social acceptance. Similarly, the major objective of migrant middle-class parents on the move is to adapt to a new sociocultural context (Joiko and Vásquez 2016).

The findings for South Africa suggest that school choices of white families seem divided between two options: to adjust to the new order in social and cultural terms, or to secure their long-held privileges through exclusion and social closure (Hunter 2015b). In contrast, black South Africans are mostly oriented towards social advancement, although many are not meeting even a portion of their expected goals (Msila 2009; 2011; Hunter 2010; 2015a; b; 2017; Fataar 2010; Ndimande 2009, 2013). Even for those who are closer to attaining their goals, the process itself is bittersweet; they face overt racism and risk losing their African culture (Ndimande 2009; 2013). This finding is by no means exempt from nuances, as the variety of motives and purposes of black South Africans depend on social class and their place of residence. One prominent motive is the achievement of better foothold in the labor structure (Msila 2009), which in turn, might end up as a class project towards upwards intergenerational class mobility (Hunter 2010). Studies provide little information about the wealthiest black African class. Research shows that they mainly choose historically prestigious and expensive white schools, which provide them with social distinction (Hunter 2015b).

Obtaining a better foothold in the labor market and the reasons for improving English skills might be explained by the Apartheid legacy in terms of racial inequality and the high rates of structural unemployment (27% in general, 30% for black Africans and less than 8% for white people (Stats SA 2019)). In fact, during the Apartheid era, black Africans were dispossessed of land and city rights, forced into under-skilled labor, highly dependent on wages and subjected to regimes of migrant work under precarious working conditions (Bezuidenhout et al. 2007).

The Sociocultural Model of the Choosing Family and of Choosers' Profiles

In light of the review's findings, the cultural idea of the choosing nuclear family whose male head of household makes dispassionate decisions oriented towards the best interests of the family cannot be sustained. Results highlight the inadequacy of this model, particularly in South Africa, regarding the meanings and implications of non-nuclear families and the diversity of household arrangements for school choice. Notably, issues regarding the diversity of families, household arrangements, their gendered relationships and children's voices remain practicably unexamined by the Chilean selected reviewed studies. In this sense, the South African findings might shed a light for further research about countries sharing similar characteristics.

Both sets of studies address the feelings involved in the process of choice. In both countries, families experience feelings such as anxiety, uneasiness, frustration, resignation and even emotional pain when choosing schools (Canales, Bellei, and Orellana 2016; Bellei et al. 2017; Hernández and Raczynski 2015; Ndimande 2013, 2009). Only specific groups seem to be positively satisfied with their choice. The more reduced the probabilities of aligning desires and choice, the more emotions of uneasiness and dissatisfaction are observed. According to the results, these feelings abound among lower classes (Ndimande 2013; Hernández and Raczynski 2015; Hunter 2010; 2015a; 2015b; Bellei et al. 2017). Thus, the findings override the assumption that school decisions are made in a dispassionate manner. On the contrary, emotions play an important role in the decision making process, a finding previously reported by Ball (2013). Ball understood them as a consequence of the individualization of the risks involved in school choice when families lack institutional and social support. However, different from Ball (2003) who ascribes feelings of anxiety mainly to the middle classes, the analyzed studies stress the idea that those feelings are more likely to be experienced by the lower classes. Although middle classes in both countries show concern (e.g.

towards racism in South Africa, or fear against marginalized subjects in Chile), their angst and frustration are comparatively less than among the lower classes, and they are more confident about the outcome of the school choice process.

The key role of race, gender, space, and class in school decisions cannot be denied. The idea of a universal chooser who exercises choices based only on his or her current economic conditions regardless of such circumstances is largely contested by the findings on both countries.[8] This finding supports the results of previous research in other contexts, underlining how school choice and market-oriented policies are linked, for instance, to segregation by ability, racial and socio-economic background (Musset 2012; OECD 2014; 2017). However, the relationship between school and spatial segregation is difficult to disentangle. The South African findings are illustrative in this sense, as they highlight the enormous movement of students travelling great distances from their residences to their chosen schools (Hunter 2010; 2015a; 2015b; 2017; Fataar 2010; Ndimande 2013).

Additionally, decision-makers might have interests that are not necessarily in alignment with the best interests of the family, but they may be oriented towards other objectives such as the preservation of certain cultural traditions (e.g. intergenerational respect to authority), as observed in high-performing township schools in South Africa (Hunter 2015a). Further, it is difficult to maintain the idea of autonomous, self-interested individuals making decisions for the case of South Africa, where culture plays a crucial role in terms of reciprocity, social capital and traditional values of sharing such as *ubuntu* (Hunter 2015a), which stresses the importance of the relationships with others. Therefore, the action of financially supporting a child going to school can refer to an orientation towards interdependency among kin (e.g. parent-child bond) (Hunter 2015a). However, rather than a merely transactional relation, that bond entails a complex and varied set of meanings and expressions, ranging from parental love to a future sense of debt to sponsors (Hunter 2010; 2015a; 2015b; 2017). This finding questions the base upon which the school choice model rests (i.e. the self-interested, autonomous individual), revealing how the social construction of personhood has a fundamental impact not only on the orientations of the school decisions but also on social class and social mobility. In addition, it suggests great levels of interdependency among kinship. Therefore, the relevance of this finding goes beyond school choice research, affecting the understanding of phenomena such as social class and social mobility in contexts in the Global South marked by high levels of inequality and social segregation.

South African studies also provide useful insights on the complexities of different family arrangements, their connection with school choice decisions and their associated meanings (Hunter 2010; 2015a; 2015b; 2017). Particularly among black Africans, family and kinship arrangements across different spaces and households have proven to be fundamental to understand the meanings, dynamics and scope of school choice. A separate analysis of the social organization and the funding of a student is key to understanding the differences of school choice for children living under the same roof. Furthermore, it shows how these decisions are intertwined with the socio-economic conditions affecting families, particularly when nuclear families are a minority and parents often do not live with their children (Hunter 2015a; 2015b; 2017). The displacement of external costs of this process on families (e.g. unpaid work carried out by kin, and mostly women) highlight the burden for poor households and family arrangements, as previously discussed by Mosoetsa (2014). South African studies also provide evidence about the influence of community arrangements such as religious communities (e.g. Christian and Muslim) on child care and funding for pursuing studies, and how they might have an impact in sending a child to a specific school (Fataar 2010).

The cultural ideal of a male head of a nuclear family and breadwinner who finances a schooling project is not sustained under the socio-economic conditions in South Africa (e.g. high rates of unemployment). Financing arrangements give a dominant role to biological mothers and fathers, but also to grandmothers, other kin, and sometimes to communities that assume the financial support of a school-going child. Additionally, funds do not always come from a salary earned through jobs, but rather, for instance, from state grants and life insurance policies (Hunter 2017). Thus, what really matters according to the South African findings, is having access to a steady income that enables supporting a studying child financially, regardless of where it comes from.

Black African students in South Africa have a voice in exercising school choice, particularly among the poorest students and mainly concerning secondary education (Fataar 2010; Msila 2011; Hunter 2015a; 2015b). They express their interest and desires about schools, and these do not always coincide with the ideas of their parents. Black African women not only provide financial support and social organization to their school-going child, but they are fundamental in establishing preferences regarding school decisions (Hunter 2015a; 2015b). Admittedly, their preferences have a strong influence on the children's future studies and integration into the labor market. Therefore, the underlying assumption of school choice in which neither children nor women are choosers, is not supported by these findings.

The lack of information on these issues across the reviewed Chilean studies attracts attention. Here the "chooser" profile considers only adults, as children's voices were not part of any of the Chilean studies. Differences between women and men or fathers and mothers are not reported. References to rural areas are scarce (Hernández and Raczynski 2015) and their own dynamics, as well as potential relationships with urban zones are not reported. Further studies are needed to capture the full spectrum of "choosers" in Chile, meaning not only adults in a broader sense, but also differentiating them by sex and gender, and by including children's perspectives. The same is valid for rural areas.

The only criteria addressed by all the Chilean studies were social classes or groups, though the elite and upper-class groups were not tackled. The concentration on social class differentiation among Chilean studies is supported by most of the previous research on school choice, due to its importance in the highly stratified and segregated school system (Elacqua 2012; Valenzuela, Bellei, and de los Ríos 2014).

Circuits of Schooling Through Socially Exposed and Socially Restricted Sites

Nine different circuits of schooling engaging race, gender, place and class between socially restricted and socially exposed sites were identified as distinct educational pathways in Chile and South Africa. Out of them, four circuits were found in Chile (two in socially restricted sites, and two in socially exposed sites), and five in South Africa (two in socially restricted sites, and three in socially exposed sites).

Socially restricted sites function with high levels of selectivity, mainly oriented towards two ends: the agglomeration of those sharing similar social characteristics and the exclusion of those who are "unwanted". Results of these restrictive dynamics in circuits of schooling are twofold: the within-school homogeneity (in terms of students' composition) related to selection criteria, and the social segregation between schools related to exclusion criteria.

In Chile, two circuits of schooling are associated with restricted sites. The first one connects the middle classes with local, fee-paying subsidized private schools. These parents openly search for schools charging fees that can select and exclude students from lower classes. Rather than being academically demanding, the chosen schools work as nurturing communities that protect children with control and discipline from the mix of public schools, where "everybody can be admitted" (Canales, Bellei, and Orellana 2016). The migrant middle classes on the move (Joiko and Vásquez 2016) and the lower-class group of *uneasy strugglers* aspire to belong to this circuit of schooling, but they lack the sufficient economic and cultural capital to access it and remain in it. Therefore, their schooling trajectories show instabilities and frequent changes. For them, the ability to pay fees is a way to demonstrate their value and express their aspirations to be socially accepted within this circuit. The latter is particularly relevant for the *uneasy strugglers*, who strive for *decency* and recognition (Bellei et al. 2017). The search for decency (Martínez and Palacios 1996)[9] to manage to cope with a precarious socio-economic situation is highly significant for these parents (Bellei et al. 2017). Under this conceptual umbrella of decency (Martínez and Palacios 1996), Bellei et al. (2017) argue that the decent poor tries to distance from goods and services provided at no cost by the state such as free public education, as it ultimately would question the family's effort to pay for them. Instead, he or she works to buy the goods and services (ibid.). In addition, these *uneasy strugglers* seek to enroll their children in non-local schools in higher income municipalities. In response, the middle classes, who reject these aspirations of the *uneasy strugglers*, encapsulate themselves even further.

The second circuit of schooling for Chilean socially restricted sites relates lower classes and non-local public academically selective schools or "emblematic schools". In this circuit, the lower classes hold a meritocratic – and practically unreachable – hope, which provides them a symbolic gateway towards social advancement (Bellei et al. 2017).

In South Africa, two circuits of socially restricted schooling were found. First, a circuit linking black African middle classes with two types of schools— the suburban "multiracial schools" that are highly valued because of the native English speaking teachers, and the high-performing township schools. In the transition towards suburban multiracial schools, cultural and economic capital are intertwined with symbolic capital. Examples of the latter are the high value of English skills and the importance given to certain sports regarded as "white" (e.g. rugby, hockey and surfing) for some suburban schools, as they represent the highest level in the stratified South African social system (Hunter 2015a; 2015b).

To control the cultural losses in this circuit, some black African parents complement their child's attendance at a multiracial school with a high performing township school at the secondary level. The selection of this school is aimed towards academic performance, but also includes economic factors (Hunter 2015b). Thus, middle-class black African families keep the cultural tensions of multiracial schools under control, while they maintain the cultural and symbolic capital earned at a multiracial school.

The second circuit of schooling in socially restricted sites in South Africa connects the white upper and middle classes to prestigious and expensive formerly white schools (local in primary school, and non-local at the secondary level). The main reason behind these dynamics is the delayed pace of desegregation of formerly white schools. Over time, these suburban schools have been strategically re-oriented towards improving and refining their selective dynamics through different capitals: economic (higher fees), cultural (higher passing rates), symbolic (English skills as

a pre-requisite or sports associated with a white-upbringing) and social capital (through exclusive networks, such as the "old" boys and girls societies) (Hunter 2015b). The capital endowments embodied in a habitus of "whiteness" dominates the practices and tastes in this circuit of schooling, functioning as a hallmark that distinguishes the school, the students and their families. Due to the current agglomeration of white students in a few prestigious schools, their former language and curricular divides tend to dissolve (e.g. Afrikáans or English as the medium of instruction). In addition, their similarities in the endowment of economic and symbolic capital have been prioritized, which may suggest emerging processes of class formation that may be worth exploring.

On the other side, socially exposed sites are those open to be accessed by everyone. Socially exposed circuits of schooling in the analyzed studies not only lack social distinction, but also economic capital. Most of those who circulate across these schools lack the necessary economic resources to get access to better funded circuits of schooling within the socially restricted sites. In this group, two main orientations were found. First, the resignation to the lack of better schooling opportunities results in navigating these circuits fully aware of one's lower position in the social structure. Secondly, the struggle for admittance into a socially restrictive schooling circuit, results in being equally aware of the one's lower socio-economic position and the limitations of access.

In Chile, two circuits of schooling in socially exposed sites were found: one for lower classes attending vocational secondary schools, and another circuit linking middle-class parents on the move with multicultural schools. The first one shows two orientations: those who remain in public (free) schools and outside the market, namely the *pragmatic and traditional parents*. The second orientation encompasses the *uneasy strugglers*, who tirelessly seek access to the socially restrictive circuits of schooling (e.g. subsidized-private schools), despite their lack of economic and cultural capital (Bellei et al. 2017). Both are well aware of occupying a subordinate place within the social stratification and of living in territories of poverty, marginalization and stigmatization. For the second group, the desire to be within a non-local restrictive circuit of schooling, ideally in a better-funded municipality, is related to the wish for social protection and social acceptance rather than the exclusion of others. Both groups coincide in choosing vocational secondary schools, as this option appears as almost the default choice for them. Ultimately, this preference naturalizes their choices, which are constrained to the lowest level of the school hierarchy in Chile.

The second circuit of schooling in socially exposed sites in Chile associates middle-class parents on the move to multicultural schools, who emphasize the openness as a key feature to seek in schools, regardless of its administrative dependency (Joiko and Vásquez 2016). They prefer multicultural schools due to their school personnel, who are perceived as sensitive towards the difficulties faced by families on the move. These parents also appreciate the cultural mixture between Chilean learners and those with an international mobility background.

In South Africa, three circuits of socially exposed schooling were identified. The first circuit groups together families feeling "trapped" in township schools and excluded from their preferred schools (e.g. multiracial schools) because of their lack of economic and cultural capital (Msila 2011; 2009). The main reason given for their school preference is the desire to acquire English skills. Although fully aware of their financial constraints, families are reluctant to accept the lack of educational opportunities, expressing a desire for social improvement through schooling. Although most schools in townships are on average quite low-performing, black African parents consider their matriculation passing rate in the decision-making process. This disposition towards academic performance underpins their desire that education might lead their children into better jobs or facilitate further studies (Msila 2009).

The second circuit of socially exposed schooling in South Africa involves the most excluded group analyzed: black Africans living in urban informal settlements. Many cannot financially support their children, nor organize their daily schooling (Hunter 2010). Most do not live together with their children, as they remain in rural areas with other relatives. Lack of cultural and symbolic capital prevents the enrollment of their children into better-funded suburban schools, despite being entitled to seek admission to them by residence and to be exempted from school fees. Instead, most of their children are educated in non-fee rural schools with usually low academic results.

The third and last circuit refers to formerly white suburban schools, also known as "multiracial" schools, which are socially restricted sites for most black Africans. Due to their rapid desegregation, these multiracial schools have become socially exposed sites for most white students (Hunter 2015b). However, this assessment does not apply to all whites attending desegregated, formerly white schools. Some parents living in historically working-class white areas believe that racially mixed schools are an advantage for their children, considering the undergoing social transformations (Hunter 2015a).

The analysis of these nine circuits of schooling in both countries shows two main trends. First, there is a tendency in socially restricted circuits of schooling to associate certain social groups (particularly, but not exclusively, the middle classes) with dynamics of social distinction and social closure. Secondly, there is a trend in socially exposed circuits of schooling to develop strategies oriented towards a better foothold into the labor market, social acceptance and cultural adaptation.

In South Africa, the socially restricted and exposed circuits of schooling represents a scenario in which spatial segregation, in addition to socio-racial inequalities, is a relevant driving force behind the movement of students across educational preferences. The shift from mostly racial-based inequalities in the Apartheid era towards more class-based inequalities in the post-Apartheid era, with open enrollment and deracialization policies (Soudien and Sayed 2004), has not in fact removed race as a key element for understanding schooling paths. Instead, class appears as an additional factor adding complexity to the variety of schooling circuits, a finding which has been corroborated by other studies (Seekings and Nattrass 2008). Based on this analysis, the idea according to which school choice policies could help to dismantle the legacy of racial segregation and inequalities inherited from the Apartheid cannot be supported. School stratification in South Africa post-Apartheid has been reorganized, although it remains segregated (Van der Berg 2007; Spaull 2015; Hoadley 1998; Soudien and Sayed 2004). The white upper and middle classes, along with the black upper class and the black African middle classes, profit the most from school choice strategies, a tendency supported by previous studies (Tikly and Mabogoane 1997).

The white upper and middle classes rely on strategies of conglomeration and exclusion of those who lack similar endowment of economic and symbolic capital. Hence, upper and middle-class English-speaking white students are grouped with white Afrikáans-speaking students in the same schools. The inclusion of high-income black Africans in prestigious formerly white schools, although briefly mentioned, was not addressed in depth. Black Africans with higher income, who have formerly been among the most disadvantaged racial groups in South Africa, have developed strategies to increase their opportunities of social advancement through schooling by accessing restricted schooling circuits, a finding consistent with previous research (Soudien 2004). Black Africans from lower classes who live in townships and rural areas, however, remain trapped in

circuits of socially exposed schooling, highly excluded from social advancements through education. Intertwined relationships between rural and urban spaces highlight how the extended family networks of black Africans play a significant role in the funding and in the daily organization needed to support a school-age child. Among black Africans, particularly middle and lower classes, kinship and gendered family relationships are a large influence on a child's schooling path.

Two major trends are found at the secondary school level in South Africa: a circuit for upper and middle-class white students and a circuit for middle-class black students. Both show similarities and differences; for primary education, both tend to choose a specific type of school: local suburban for white students and suburban non-local for black African students. Similarly, at the secondary level, both show a particular pattern: suburban non-local for most white students and elite local township schools for black African students. Compared with the other groups analyzed, the strategies of those two groups especially involve a greater movement of students across different urban spaces, with clear differences between primary and secondary levels. This finding informs us about the elaborate tactics of school choice, which are deeply influenced by social, racial and spatial segregation, as well as by cultural hegemony. Despite their former intra-racial group differences, most white families attempt to gather their children within the same school circuit, while black African families prefer local elite schools that are respectful of their cultures, which may indicate cultural tensions within both groups.

In Chile, the socially restricted and socially exposed circuits of schooling show the deep impact of market-oriented reforms in education. The municipalization of public schools and profound long-standing privatization processes have turned most of them, which are open to the general public, into places of rejection for the middle class and some lower-class sectors. Only in exceptional cases based on high academic selection do public schools become places of choice. Hence, the most relevant aspect across the four circuits of schooling in Chile is the connection between social class and the different types of schools. While the middle classes are associated with fee-paying subsidized-private schools, the lower classes are linked to public schools. As briefly mentioned, the upper class was not studied directly. However, results suggest that this class is concentrated in the expensive non-subsidized private schools. These findings confirm studies on the increasing stratification and the socio-economic and academic segregation of the Chilean schooling system (Elacqua 2012; Bellei 2015; Bellei, Contreras, et al. 2018; Gauri 1999).

Spatial dynamics, although mentioned, were not described in-depth in the selected Chilean studies. However, there is a tendency to prefer local schools for middle and lower classes – except for the *uneasy strugglers* –, or at least schools not so far from their residences. As previous studies have found, schools are much more segregated than their neighbourhoods (Valenzuela and Montecinos 2017). This finding hints at a need to further explore the linkages between residence and school with spatial and between-school segregation. Former studies have found that segregation is not homogeneously spread throughout the country, but rather that it concentrates in large areas that can sustain school competition (McEwan et al. 2008).

At least four major differentiation dynamics are operating in Chile at the secondary level. First, the necessity arises among the middle class to choose a distinctive secondary school, because this is where and when the major networking processes are taking place (Martuccelli and Araujo 2015). Secondly, the aspiration of being admitted into an emblematic school surfaces for lower classes. Thirdly, to most of lower classes, choosing a vocational secondary school appears almost as a default preference. Fourthly, within the lower classes, the group of *uneasy strugglers* seek to enroll their children in higher income municipalities (Bellei et al. 2017). These differenti-

ated options for secondary education in Chile may suggest that there is increased segregation at the secondary school level. Findings from previous research indicate that academic segregation between schools is especially high in secondary education (Valenzuela, Bellei, and de los Ríos 2014; Villalobos and Valenzuela 2012). Furthermore, the fact that three out of four of these options relate to lower classes is significant, as it suggests that processes of segregation and intra-class divisions could be more dynamic for this group than for the middle classes.

Conclusion

The production and reproduction of restrictive schooling circuits result in separated social spaces that function differently from the socially exposed ones, due to that they concentrate and distribute distinctions associated with symbolic hierarchies. Hence, market devices such as school choice are not restricted to the educational sphere, but also help to legitimize social domination (Windle 2016).

As a society in transformation, the legitimizing function of school choice becomes especially evident in the case of South Africa. Whereas racial motives are nowadays less meaningful for the justification of social inequality than they used to be, symbolic distinctions are still linked to the former Apartheid structure (e.g. the high status of English and the valorization of whiteness). However, it cannot be argued that a racial system of inequality has been replaced by a class system. Rather, both are actively functioning in the processes of social stratification, and both affect school segregation through educational preferences. While the majority of South Africa aspires and believes in social advancement through better educational opportunities, under the current circumstances, only a privileged minority manages to actually achieve them. Nevertheless, this belief structure has a broad impact not only on aspirations and hopes, but also on educational preferences.

As opposed to South Africa, Chile exhibits an extensive and consolidated quasi-market, invoking technocratic and ideological arguments. In a similar fashion to the naturalization of the social structure, highly stratified school decisions are taken for granted. A possible explanation for this is that the implementation of market policies under authoritarian governments, which remained almost uncontested during the democratic period in Chile, managed to install an ideological image of a self-regulated market society in which people are consumers who choose between different options (Lechner 2002).

Thus, the differences in which preferences of school choice are shaped in both countries underlines the divergent penetration and implementation of market orientations. Although in both cases market devices were successfully introduced, the legitimation of their functioning works differently according to their historical developments, institutional arrangements and socio-economic transformations. This confirms the assumption that the interactions between school choice policies and local contexts leads to different patterns of choice.

This analysis provided a systematization of experiences from two countries from the Global South, differing from most of the comparative studies on this issue, which do not exclusively address these countries. It hereby contributed to filling a knowledge gap and to challenging assumptions about the functioning of school choice, particularly in highly segregated and unequal contexts.

In light of the findings of this study, the economic and cultural model underlying school choice policies and its rationale cannot be sustained. Moreover, this article's analysis provided insights not necessarily restricted to contexts from the Global South. This article is also relevant to future studies investigating countries from the Global North in order to critically address the symbolic struggles taking place in school choice dynamics, the relevance of the family and its gendered structure in these decisions, as well as the complex relations between rural and urban spaces.

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Notes

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[2]Most research either encompasses a compilation of a wide diversity of countries, or compares vis-à-vis two countries with a sharp contrast (e.g. Chile compared to the U.S.A., the U.K. or Finland; South Africa compared to the U.K. or the U.S.A).

[3]Studies have compared the Chilean case to countries such as Finland (Kosunen and Carrasco 2016), Spain (Rambla, Valiente, and Frías 2011), and the U.S.A. (Ladd 2002). Recent comparisons involving South Africa – either vis-à-vis or within a set of countries – have been based on other issues. Most of these studies used quantitative approaches, mixed methods, and secondary data analysis; only a few have exclusively used a qualitative empirical approach (Schweisfurth 1999; Epstein 1999; Books and Ndlalane 2011; Casinader 2014; Read and Bick 2014). Recently, a study was published involving two countries from the Global South, one of them being Chile (Alves et al. 2015).

[4]School students are commonly called "penguins" due to their uniform's distinct shape and colour.

[5]The Group Areas Act (1950) assigned racial groups to different residential and business sections, reinforcing the segregation planning upon all population groups and on all urban areas.

[6]Databases considered: ProQuest, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Taylor and Francis online, DOAJ, ISI, Scielo, Redalyc, Dialnet, Latindex, African Journals Online, Sabinet, Google Scholar database and Research Gate. Additionally, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), the Child Development & Adolescent Studies, the Education database, the Education full text, Education Source, International Educational Research and the EPPI-Centre database of education research were examined. Two African journals were scanned: the Africa Research Journal of Education and Social Sciences and the African Educational Research Journal, as both were not present in the aforementioned databases. The Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin library also was considered.

[7]There were five selected articles for Chile (Martuccelli and Araujo 2015; Hernández and Raczynski 2015; Joiko and Vásquez 2016; Canales, Bellei, and Orellana 2016; Bellei et al. 2017) and nine selected articles for South Africa (Msila 2009; 2011; Ndimande 2009; 2013; Fataar 2010; Hunter 2010; 2015a; 2015b; 2017).

[8]For more details, see the circuits of schooling analysis.

[9]Decency here refers to the word decencia in Spanish. According to Martínez and Palacios (1996), in impoverished contexts where specific public policies targeting the poor are implemented, the culture of decency is builds on the assertion of the possibility of a person overcoming the degrading effects of poverty. This assertion is based on the subjection to a strict moral code. Bellei et al. (2017) build on this idea to indicate that, for some lower-class groups, the value of paying school fees is linked to their search for decency.

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