Private school choice and postmaterialism. What values are at stake?

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Expansion of private school choice in the city of Buenos Aires: paradigmatic explanations*

i) Privatization as a result of the general improvement in household incomes

ii) Privatization as a result of teacher strikes in the public sector

iii) Privatization as a result of families increasingly seeking better educational outcomes

iv) Privatization as a consequence of socioeconomic segregation and self-segregation processes

v) Privatization as a consequence of the publification of private education

vi) Privatization as a quasi-spontaneous phenomenon

vii) Privatization as a result of neoliberal policies

viii) Privatization as a state policy

*Privatization refers to enrolment in private schools (Narodowski, Moschetti & Gottau, 2017)
Objectives

What values are at stake in the process of school secondary school choice in the city of Buenos Aires?

Do these values stem from subjective or structural factors?
Theoretical framework

Materialist and post-materialist values introduced by Inglehart (1971).

Materialist values: curricular offer, public/private offer, school fee, distance, and school resources.

Post-materialist values: subjective factors associated with parents’ social identity and social values.
Methodology

City of Buenos Aires

24 parents with children in last year of primary schools with no secondary school

Primary schools located in two school districts - High SES and low SES:

Social vulnerability Index

District 13: (0.000 - 0.162) two schools

District 4: (0.301 - 0.642) two schools

Source: Informes Temáticos De La Dirección de Investigación y Estadística del Ministerio de Educación del GCBA.
Documento metodológico.
Findings

Preeminence of materialistic values relative to security and protection

Preeminence of materialistic values relative to academic achievement

Preeminence of post-materialistic values relative to socialization

Preeminence of post-materialistic values relative political concerns
Security and protection

“I want my kid to be told what is right and what is wrong”

“I don’t want she ends up like her cousin, with a baby at 15!”
Security and protection

Conception of 7th grade child: a little kid who still needs protection and care. Value discipline over creativity Seek protection and security Main drivers: distance to school, school fee, absence of strikes Low SES Highest educational level: secondary school Universe of school choice options: low fee private schools (Catholic schools) Representation of school: upward social mobility Schooling = betterment of family education
“What do I expect from the school? The children should be given loads to study because they have time”

“The entrance exam can’t be that difficult. It was thought for kids their age”
Academic achievement

Conception of 7th grade child: old enough to know better and ready to face greater challenges

Value meritocracy and autonomy

Seek autonomy for their children

Main drivers: high academic achievement

Mid SES

Highest educational level: secondary school/ University degree (mothers)

Universe of school choice options: technical state schools

or the schools of the University of Buenos Aires (elite)

Representation of school: a place to study and learn

Schooling = reproduction of lifestyle
“There is no perfect school but there is something like speaking the same language”

"What do I want for my daughter? It's simple, a place where she can reproduce her lifestyle, where there are middle class children”
Socialization

Conception of 7th grade child: not a kid any longer but still need some guidance and protection

Value: socioeconomic composition of the school

Seek: homogeneous socialization and reproduce their lifestyle

Main drivers: School prestige and social distinction

Mid-high SES

Highest educational level: University and post-graduate

Universe of school choice options: private elite schools- secular or confessional.

Representation of school: a place where the same language is spoken

School education = social reproduction & distinction
“I strongly defend public school, for me it has other values, if there is no public school, there are no social values at all”

“Schools should be free because education is a right we have”
Political concerns

Conception of 7th grade child: not clearly stated

Value: the importance of State interference in education and strongly reject the introduction of market forces in the educational field

Seek: educate good citizens and take pride in choosing ‘against that grain’ by sending their children to public schools, reject market forces in education field

Main drivers: social, cultural and economic heterogeneity, diversity and pluralism.

SES: heterogeneous

Highest educational level: heterogeneous

Universe of school choice options: state schools

Representation of school: public schools are a political standpoint and political identity (socialist)

School education = State education
Conclusions

School choice in an unregulated context has diverse meanings and representations

These meanings and representations are in line with the values at stake

Materialistic values:
Low SES: value safety and protection, distance to school and affordable school fees
Mid-high SES: value academic achievement

Post-materialistic values:
Low SES do not consider post materialistic values

Socialization and political concerns are highly regarded in high SES with high levels of education.
Thanks for your time!

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