The socialization of meritocracy and market justice preferences at school

Introduction

Since its origins, educational institutions have been related to the idea of social mobility and access to better opportunities. Therefore, the consistent evidence of the high level of social reproduction at the school level represents a threat to the promise of education and a meritocratic system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). A large part of the research in this field at an international level has addressed the extent to which the social origin of students affects their academic results and their life opportunities (Von Hippel and Hamrock 2019), confirming that schools have severe difficulties in closing the gaps of origin. Besides this socioeconomic perspective on school opportunities, recent research has addressed to what extent inequalities in the school context are also influencing students' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes: Are social inequalities perceived at the school context? Are they rejected by the students, particularly those who are worst-off in socioeconomic terms? Or, Is there evidence at the school level that social inequalities are tolerated and even justified? (Batruch et al. 2022; Wiederkehr et al. 2015).

In the present paper, we deal with the justification of social inequalities by eighth-grade students in Chile, a country characterized by a highly stratified educational system. In particular, we focus on market justice preferences (Lane 1986), which refer to the preferences for distributing public goods (as health and education) based on criteria such as competition and payment capacity. Although from a rational point of view it could be expected an opposition to market justice by the underprivileged majority, we argue that in a social environment characterized by a promotion of meritocratic ideals - as the school system - would lead to the opposite: a larger market justice preferences.

Given that the school environment has an important focus on performance, achievement and acknowledgment, meritocracy has been one of the principal concepts used for understanding and even for justifying performance differences among students. Meritocracy is a distributive system based on the belief that people should be rewarded and promoted based on their abilities, knowledge, and achievements (Young 1958). It is often seen as a way to create equal opportunities and fairness, as individuals can rise to positions of power and influence based on their own merit rather than their background or connections. However, some argue that meritocracy can actually lead to tolerating or even justifying social inequalities, as it can create a hierarchy where those who already have resources and advantages are more likely to succeed. In this regard, a great deal of academic research about meritocracy delves into the assessment of to what extent rewards and privileges in society are related to merit, emphasizing the so-called unfulfillable promise of meritocracy (Mijs 2016). Complementing this agenda, a second and emerging research area deals with subjective aspects of meritocracy, such as perceptions and beliefs.

[definición de market justice, welfare marketization, (Lindh)]

[contexto Chileno market justice, dar cifras/porcentajes de privatización de salud, educación y pensiones; asociar al tema de la calidad (lo público es peor)]

The perception of meritocracy refers to how individuals view and understand the concept of meritocracy in their own society (Duru-Bellat and Tenret 2012; Castillo et al. 2019). This perception can vary greatly depending on individual experiences, social, economic, and cultural background. Some people may see meritocracy as a fair and just system that allows anyone to succeed based on their abilities and hard work. In contrast, others may view it as a myth or a cover for existing power dynamics and inequality, serving to maintain and even reinforce inequality (Lampert 2013; Mijs 2021). Based in this last perspective, we argue that individuals with a higher perception of meritocracy will show a larger justification of social inequalities, as individual achievement would be seen as rewarded and social policies as less necessary (Batruch et al. 2022).

Most of the research that has related meritocratic beliefs to inequality justification so far has only considered adults, leaving aside the study of how beliefs in this field develop at student age as well as the impact of the school context and the family as the main socialization agencies. Regarding schools, the way in which they deal with unequal conditions of origin has been linked to the *hidden curriculum* (Chafel 1997), whereby students learn about distributive norms in society and mechanisms of justification of social differences. Based on recent studies that relate school meritocracy to the justification of economic inequalities in the adult population (Batruch et al. 2022; Wiederkehr et al. 2015), the central hypothesis guiding this research is that school-age students with a higher perception of meritocracy - both at school and at the societal level - will show a larger justification of social inequalities, as individual achievement would be seen as appropriately rewarded and social mechanisms for correcting inequalities as less necessary (Batruch et al. 2022).

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[introducir distinción sobre percepción de meritocracia a nivel escolar y a nivel de la sociedad]

[resaltar 3 focos de innovación: market justice preferences at school level, relación con meritocracia, y esquema de meritocracia en la escuela y en la sociedad]

The present paper deals with the association between the perception of meritocracy and the justification of social inequalities, with two main focuses. Firstly, it assesses the justification of social inequalities in social policy domains, such as health, pensions, and education. We argue that individuals who perceive more meritocracy would be more willing to justify better services in these domains for those with higher incomes. Secondly, we focus on the student-age population as we point out that it is possible to track down the origin of meritocratic beliefs (and their consequences) to early socialization processes. To this regard, we take into account the family and the school as two main socialization agencies that play a significant role in the socialization of cultural beliefs by transmitting cultural norms, values, and expectations to young people.

Justification of inequality

Research on social stratification beliefs, which explore individual perceptions of who deserves what and why (Kluegel and Smith 1987), highlights that people's explanations and justifications of social inequality are closely tied to their judgments of deservingness. The influence of ideologies (Wegener and Liebig 1995) and cultural schemas (Homan, Valentino, and Weed 2017) is pivotal in shaping these explanations by offering symbolic representations that frame societal structures and expectations. While significant attention has been paid to wage inequality, income distribution, and payment differentials in the literature [Castillo (2011); Evans et al., 2010; Jasso (1999) ; Shariff, Wiwad, and Aknin (2016)], there has been less examination of public beliefs about which life domains should be governed by market relations and even less about children's acceptance or rejection of these market principles. This oversight is notable given the extensive encroachment of market logic into public goods, welfare policy, and social services over the past five decades (Centeno and Cohen 2012; Harvey 2015), affecting areas such as pensions, health services, and education. The justification of social inequality based on marketype criteria has been conceptualized as the individuals' adherence to one specific justice evaluation, the market justice, that is, affording legitimacy to the allocation of goods and services based on prices and individuals' ability to pay (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Lane 1986; Streeck 2012).

Robert E. Lane proposed the underpinnings of market justice, which he differentiated from political justice. For him, "it is the genius of the market to stimulate wants without at the same time stimulating a sense of deserving more than one gets" [-Lane (1986); p. 384]. Following the theory of relative deprivation –a social phenomenon arising when individuals cannot afford what most others in their environment can (Merton 1950)– Lane notes that, in market settings, social comparisons are more likely to motivate increased effort rather than feelings of acute injustice because individuals attribute outcomes to their actions. Although empirical research has shown that, contrary to Lane's observation, relative deprivation, even in market settings, produces feelings of dissatisfaction, anger, and resentment that might motivate forms of collective action such as protests and revolt (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou 2016; Mishra and Carleton 2015; Smith et al. 2012; Séamus A. Power 2018; Séamus A. Power, Madsen, and Morton 2020), the conceptualization of market justice has been since then closely coupled to the merit principle for allocating outcomes: the claim that the unequal levels of well-being individuals enjoy ought to be, to some extent, a function of their talents and efforts, regardless of their needs or membership, the two latter being the realm of political justice and its closely coupled principles of need –allocating outcomes to those who require them most– and equality –allocating the same outcome to everyone–, which have been at the center of welfarism (see Wilson 2003). The underlying notion of market justice also resonates in its application to welfare regimes, providing a framework for understanding the varied global approaches to managing social services.

The management of social services manifests in varying approaches across nations, with substantial differences in funding and delivery methods (Jensen 2008; Stoy 2014). Nordic coun-

tries, for example, predominantly employ public agencies to produce and provide social services, funding these through collective taxation and offering them in kind to the majority of citizens. This system prioritizes political justice, placing it above market mechanisms in accessing services. In contrast, other countries rely more heavily on for-profit entities and private funding, where service distribution depends mainly on individual financial capacity of paying user fees, highlighting the influence of market justice in service allocation. The trend toward marketization of welfare services has been growing since the 1980s (Salamon 1993), and this shift is increasingly evident even in countries where market solutions have traditionally had a minor role in social policy (Sivesind 2017).

The question arises whether adults and children justify unequal access to welfare services based on market justice principles. Influenced by theories of policy feedback, which suggest that social welfare policies can reinforce (positive feedback) or undermine (negative feedback) previous policy trajectories (Fernandez and Jaime-Castillo 2013; Pierson 2000; Weaver 2010), citizens' beliefs about market justice are likely also shaped by the institutional and social contexts they encounter. Indeed, the justification of inequality in access to essential services like education and health, based on one's ability to pay, shows significant variation across countries, as demonstrated by international surveys, although they do not usually include children in their samples. For instance, the 2019 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) provides insights into how adults perceive inequality in accessing welfare services. Figure 1 illustrates the variation in agreement levels regarding whether it is just for individuals with higher incomes to purchase better education or healthcare. Notably, in 18 of the 29 countries analyzed, there is a greater justification for market inequality in healthcare access than in education. Nevertheless, the general sentiment typically ranges from 'somewhat unjust' to 'neither just nor unjust, with mixed feelings.

While contemporary policy developments have increasingly embraced the marketization of social welfare in areas such as education, pensions, and health services, questions about public acceptance of these changes persist. Lindh (2015) analysis of ISSP 2009 data from 17 OECD countries reveals a general lack of support for market-based distribution of social services, suggesting widespread disapproval of market stratification of essential services. This finding is corroborated by Soler-Martínez, García-Sánchez, and Willis (2023) research from Latinobarómetro 2020 across 18 Latin American countries, where concerns about health and education access predominated over income inequality. These results indicate that reforms toward welfare marketization are typically driven by elite political decisions rather than grassroots demand.

Despite high-income inequality and limited social mobility in Latin America, there is a prevalent belief that individuals are solely responsible for their economic outcomes, a view that varies across the region (Bucca 2016; Chong and Ñopo 2008; Torche 2014; Salgado and Castillo 2023). The reliance on private welfare providers and widespread user fees (Molyneux 2008) adds complexity to this context. Yet, research on children's justification of market-based inequalities in accessing welfare services remains limited, especially in Latin America, highlighting a significant gap in understanding how younger generations view market-based access to welfare and

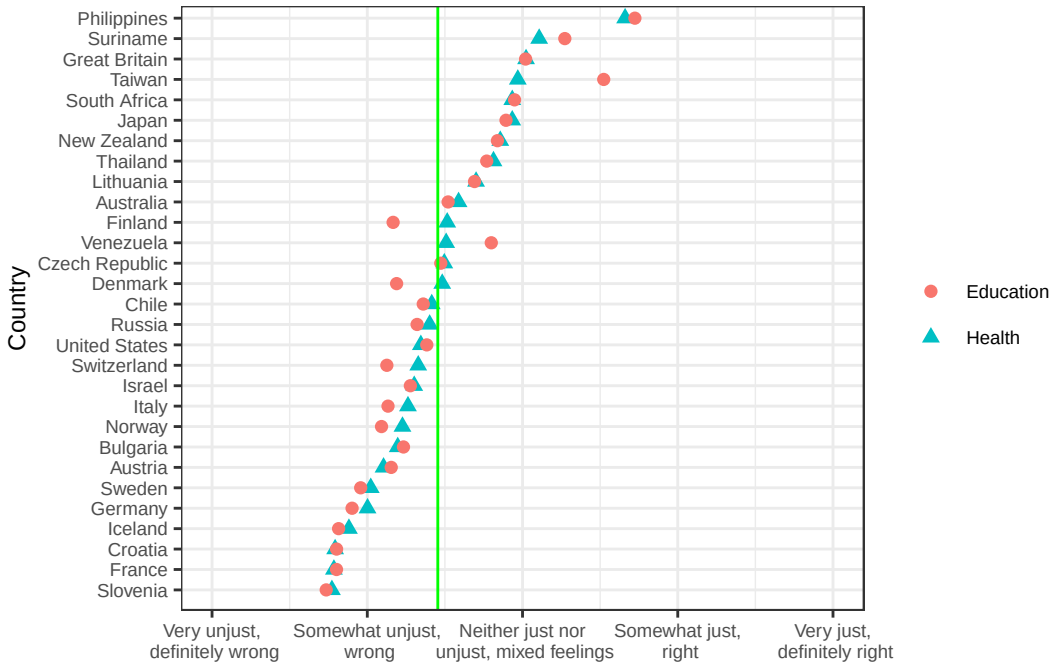

Figure 1: Average of market justice preferences by country

whether these views are associated with their meritocratic beliefs.

Meritocracy

The concept of meritocracy frequently appears nowadays when analyzing cultural determinants of social inequalities. In general, it is mentioned as a value associated with justice, as it would link efforts and talents with rewards in an equitable manner. This normative sense is quite far from its original formulation by Young (1958) in the satirical novel "The Rise of Meritocracy", where it ironically represented a mechanism for reproducing the inequalities of origin. The meritocratic ideal had remained relatively unchallenged until a series of recent publications turned into its potential consequences for maintaining social inequality. Perhaps one of the most recent sources in this line is Michael Sandel's "The Tyranny of Merit", where he strongly questions the implications of carrying out the principle of merit in societies that do not guarantee equal opportunities and that generate a feeling of scarce recognition and appreciation of those who receive lesser rewards: "In society's eyes, and perhaps also their own, their work no longer signified a valued contribution to the common good." (Sandel 2020, pp.).

Empirical research on meritocracy has increased along with the philosophical-normative discussion on meritocracy in recent years. Particularly from a sociological perspective, meritoc-

racy has been used in research on social mobility to characterize societies with low mobility that threaten the meritocratic ideal (Goldthorpe 2003). More recently, sociology and social psychology research has attended to the subjective aspects vis-a-vis beliefs in meritocracy. The label of beliefs in this realm covers a series of areas, such as attitudes, perceptions, and preferences (Castillo et al), whereby most of the link this subjective dimensions to individual socio-structural factors and context-level determinants. For instance, some studies have analyzed how those with greater privileges believe more in meritocracy (Reynolds & Chan 2014), how greater economic inequality increases meritocratic beliefs (Mijs 2021), and how larger inequality affects meritocratic beliefs (Morris et al. 2022). Based on these findings, a research agenda has been reinforced on the legitimizing role of meritocracy, in line with previous studies using the concept of a just world (Lerner, Dalbert) and the theory of system justification (Jost & Major).

How do meritocratic beliefs legitimize inequalities? Empirical studies have used experiments and surveys to address this question. For instance, the evidence suggests that just world beliefs correlate negatively with support for redistributive compensation systems (Frank, Wertenbroch, and Maddux 2015). Conversely, individuals tend to support redistribution when they believe that the disadvantaged lack the opportunities to succeed (Evans and Kelley 2018). Almås, Cappelen, and Tungodden (2020) found that in a relatively unequal society (the United States), the highly educated accept inequality significantly more than the less educated because they perceive inequality as justifiable owing to differences in productivity (i.e., merit), whereas in a relatively equal society (Norway), the less educated accept inequality more, but not significantly more than the highly educated because meritocratic values are less prevalent. Barr and Miller (2020) also addressed this triple interaction between the level of inequality in a society, the individual level of education, and the perceived origin of the disparity (either by luck or effort) to determine the extent to which inequality is accepted. They found that the interaction's mechanism varies depending on the compared societies. Finally, García-Sánchez et al. (2020), using data for 41 countries from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), found that the perceived size of the income gap correlated positively with support for progressive taxation. Still, this association was weaker among those who endorsed meritocratic and equal opportunity beliefs. In the same line, experimental research by Durante and Putterman (2009) subjects support less redistribution when the initial distribution is determined according to task performance.

Research about meritocratic beliefs at school age is rather scarce, leaving a wide research gap as schools are one of the primary socialization institutions where achievement based on merit explains success (Erivwo et al. 2021). Nevertheless, it is possible to find some initial works focused on the area of distributive justice at school that are closely related to meritocratic beliefs, as the ones by Resh and Sabbagh (quotes). Using justice in grade obtention as a measure of distributive justice and meritocracy (Sabbagh et al 2006), they find for instance that a larger sense of distributive justice about grades is associated to higher socio-economic status (Resh 2010), have a positive effect on liberal democratic orientation and on trust in people and in formal institutions (Resh and Sabbagh 2014), and tend to refrain from violence and

to engage to a greater extent in extra-curricular school activity and community volunteering (Resh and Sabbagh 2017).

Children's judgments of inequality, schools, and family background

Research indicates various socialization practices at families and schools during childhood and adolescence that impact dispositional and behavioral tendencies concerning justifications of inequality in adult life. The differences in economic understanding across age groups are consistent with research on cognitive development (Choudhury, Blakemore, and Charman 2006). Adolescents with mature socio-cognitive abilities tend to express stronger preferences for fairness than infants and children (Wynn et al. 2018). As children grow older, they become more likely to behave fairly, with their early-emerging strict egalitarianism being replaced by an increasing endorsement of fairness principles and engagement in collaborative activities (Huppert et al. 2019; McAuliffe et al. 2017). In these activities, their fairness views consider individual contributions, merits, and circumstances (Almås et al. 2010; Huppert et al. 2019; Sigelman and Waitzman 1991). Engelmann and Tomasello (2019) claim that children's sense of fairness emerges at three years old, and we can observe it in collaborative activities, where they accept inequality if the procedure gives everyone an equal chance. Therefore, children at this age respond to unequal distributions based on interpersonal concerns, as they already demand equal respect. In any case, between 3 and 8 years of age, inequitable and anti-meritorious allocations are evaluated more negatively, but equitable and meritorious allocations are not evaluated more positively (Elenbaas 2019).

Some research shows that the social environment in which children develop, such as family and school, is associated with their prosocial behaviors by playing an essential role in the transmission of equity norms (Schunk and Zipperle 2023; Kosse and Tincani 2020). In fact, schools contribute to institutionalizing and reproducing inequality by promoting values, norms, practices, and languages familiar to higher-class families because the dominant group's culture shapes educational institutions (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Middle- and upper-class students are better equipped to face academic challenges and are more familiar with academic expectations (Mikus, Tieben, and Schober 2020). Such familiarity represents cultural capital in educational contexts because higher-status students come to school ready to meet these expectations and reap the benefits (Jack 2016; Khan 2011). Conversely, lower-status children lacking cultural capital must catch up while experiencing inequitable comparisons (Goudeau and Croizet 2017). Additionally, academic achievement is treated as the outcome of dispositional factors (e.g., pupils' efforts and talents or lack of them) rather than the result of differential access to critical resources. Due to the meritocratic frame schools encourage, both low- and high-status individuals believe that students' success or failure is not due to their family background but rather to differences in efforts and talents (Darnon et al. 2018). In this sense, we believe that the perception of meritocracy can influence students' judgments about market justice preferences. Furthermore, we believe there is a difference between students'

perceptions of meritocracy based on their own experience in school and what they perceive in society at large. Consistently, our first two hypotheses are:

H1a: Students who perceive that there is more meritocracy at school will show larger market justice preferences

H1b: Students who perceive that there is more meritocracy in society will show larger market justice preferences

Family background and family socialization practices also contribute to children's and adolescent's market justice preferences. For example, Almås et al. (2017) found that adolescents from low-socioeconomic-status families are likelier to have an egalitarian fairness view and consider an equal distribution as fair in a situation with unequal merits. The authors speculate that differences in socialization practices across status groups might bring about, to a great extent, the fairness views of children and adolescents because social status seems to interact with these evaluations (e.g., Hvidberg, Kreiner, and Stantcheva 2023).

The classic work of Kohn showed that middle-class parents value the expression of internal states and emotions, such as self-control, curiosity, happiness, and consideration, while working-class parents promote deference, obedience, and conformity to authority (Kohn 1963; Kohn and Schooler 1969). Although parents from all social backgrounds encourage individualism in their children, this shared norm translates into different forms in high and low social classes (1999). Acemoglu (2021) claimed that the values families impart to their children interact with social mobility. Because obedience is a valuable characteristic for employers, in low-wage and social mobility environments, low-income families impart values of obedience to their children to prevent disadvantaging them in labor markets. On the one hand, children from privileged families are socialized to adopt a clear conception of individualism that highlights their internal states, independence, and idiosyncrasies. In contrast, children from disadvantaged families are socialized to support a more balanced view of individualism that considers personal characteristics as resources to overcome collective impediments on the path to upward mobility (Iacoviello and Lorenzi-Cioldi 2019). In this way, we believe that there are differences in the socialization of values according to socioeconomic differences that could influence market justice preferences and, therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Students from families of higher social status will show larger market justice preferences.

Recent empirical research has demonstrated that the institutional design of schools, coupled with the meritocratic ideology it fosters, significantly influences children's and adolescents' views on inequality and deservingness. For example, Jonsson and Beach (2015) study revealed that higher-status adolescents in Sweden tend to perpetuate social class stereotypes while describing the vocational and academic tracks. Academic track students are depicted as wealthy, intelligent, ambitious, and diligent, while vocational track students are characterized as poor, unambitious, unintelligent, and lackadaisical. These stereotypes help individuals maintain a sense of superiority over others and legitimize the prevailing social hierarchies and economic disparities (Jost and Burgess 2000)

H3: Students from schools of higher social status will show larger market justice preferences.

H4: Students from schools with higher average levels of academic achievement will show larger market justice preferences.

[interacciones]

H5: The perception of meritocracy in school and society will moderate the effect of family social status on market justice preferences.

H6: The perception of meritocracy in school and society will moderate the effect of school status on market justice preferences.

H7: The perception of meritocracy in school and society will moderate the effect of school academic achievement on market justice preferences.

Summary of hypotheses

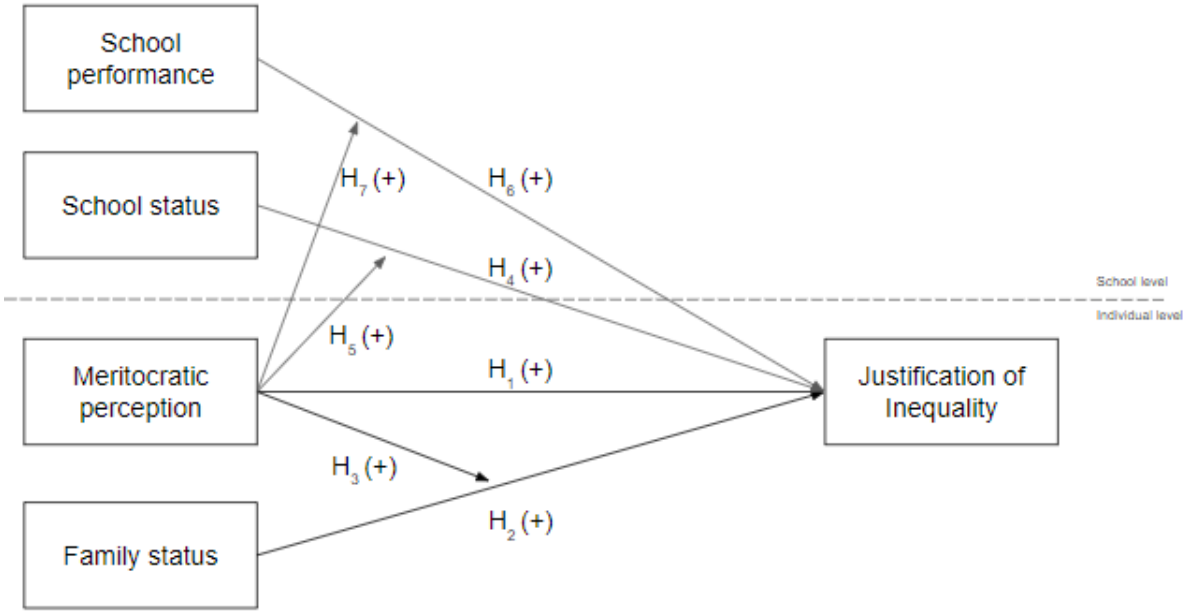

Figure 2: Summary of hypotheses

Methods

Data

The main data source for the analysis is the First Study of Citizenship Education in Chile, carried out by the Education Quality Agency of the Ministry of Education. The application date was November 9, 2017. The target population of this study is Eighth-grade students from 242 schools. In the data, there are 8,589 students and 6,770 parents. This database was analyzed with the R package "ResponsePatterns" to detect possible repetitive and "careless" response patterns and thus contribute to a higher quality of research data (Gottfried, et al 2022). Responses from 171 students and 79 parents were removed, which, when merged, gave a total of 6,270 valid cases.

The analysis of school variables includes data from the Ministry of Education's SIMCE 2017 database. This database contains information at the school level, such as the administrative dependency, its socioeconomic classification, and the achievement scores obtained in the mathematics and language census tests. It is available for free use on the MINEDUC [web page].

After eliminating missing cases, the final sample used in the analysis was based on 5,047 students and parents of 231 schools for the dependent variable of access to social services.

Variables

Dependent variables

This study has three dependent variables related to the justification of social inequality in specific policy domains. The first asks whether access to social services should be conditional on income, i,.e., "It is just that in Chile people who can pay have a better education for their children". Students rated their preferences using the following responses: "strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", and "strongly agree". An average index is built with these items (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,86). (Apéndice: items en español y su correspondiente traducción al inglés)

Table 1 shows the items used, their response categories, and their frequencies.

Table 1: Dependent variables

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
It is just that in Chile people with higher incomes can have better pensions than people with low incomes	1. Strongly disagree	1837 (30.6%)	6012 (95.9%)
	2. Disagree	1945 (32.4%)	
	3. Agree	1622 (27.0%)	
	4. Strongly agree	608 (10.1%)	

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
It is just that in Chile people who can pay have a better education for their children	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	1766 (29.7%) 1732 (29.1%) 1704 (28.6%) 750 (12.6%)	5952 (94.9%)
It is just that in Chile people with higher incomes can access better health services than people with low incomes	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	2254 (38.0%) 1685 (28.4%) 1401 (23.6%) 593 (10.0%)	5933 (94.6%)
Market Justice Preferences	Mean (sd) : 2.2 (0.9) min < med < max: 1 < 2 < 4 IQR (CV) : 1.7 (0.4)	13 distinct values	6077 (96.9%)

Independent variables

For the primary independent variable, the perception of meritocracy, five items address the perception of rewards according to effort and intelligence at the school and societal levels. At the school level, students answer whether "Intelligence is important to get good grades" and "Effort is important to get good grades". At the societal level, students respond to the following questions: "In Chile, people are rewarded for their efforts", "In Chile, people get what they deserve", and "In Chile, people are rewarded for their intelligence and skills". Each item was answered on a four-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree".

The rest of the independent variables are divided into individual and school levels. At the individual level, family socioeconomic status was measured by the parents' highest educational level and the number of books at home. Likewise, an index of access to technology includes the number of computers, tablets, and cell phones at home, as well as whether there is an Internet connection. Table 2 shows the items used, their response categories, and their frequency.

Table 2: Independent variables

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
Intelligence is important to get good grades	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	367 (6.1%) 920 (15.3%) 2970 (49.4%) 1760 (29.3%)	6017 (95.9%)
Effort is important to get good grades	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	109 (1.8%) 88 (1.5%) 1427 (23.7%) 4406 (73.1%)	6030 (96.1%)

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
In Chile, people are rewarded for their intelligence and skill	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	517 (9.0%) 1568 (27.3%) 2673 (46.6%) 983 (17.1%)	5741 (91.5%)
In Chile, people are rewarded for their efforts	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	512 (8.7%) 1733 (29.4%) 2607 (44.2%) 1050 (17.8%)	5902 (94.1%)
In Chile, people get what they deserve	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly agree	604 (10.5%) 1911 (33.1%) 2388 (41.4%) 871 (15.1%)	5774 (92.1%)
Parental educational level	1. 8th grade or less 2. Secondary Education 3. Higher tec. education 4. University or Postgraduat 5. Missing	559 (8.9%) 1698 (27.1%) 960 (15.3%) 1080 (17.2%) 1975 (31.5%)	6272 (100.0%)
Number of books at home	1. Les than 25 2. More than 25	3920 (63.2%) 2281 (36.8%)	6201 (98.9%)
Technology access index	Mean (sd) : 7.8 (2.5) min < med < max: 0 < 8 < 12 IQR (CV) : 3 (0.3)	13 distinct values	6272 (100.0%)

The school-level variables are the administrative dependency of the school, the socioeconomic classification made by the Ministry of Education, the level of performance in the SIMCE test of the school, and the proportion of parents with university or postgraduate degrees. Table 3 shows the items used, response categories, and frequency.

Table 3: School context variables

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
Proportion of parents with university level by school	Mean (sd) : 0.2 (0.2) min < med < max: 0 < 0.1 < 0.9 IQR (CV) : 0.2 (0.9)	103 distinct values	6272 (100.0%)

Label	Stats / Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid
SIMCE score by school	1. Low	2091 (33.3%)	6272
	2. Medium	2091 (33.3%)	(100.0%)
	3. High	2090 (33.3%)	
Administrative dependency of school	1. Public	2659 (42.4%)	6272
	2. Subsidized private	3169 (50.5%)	(100.0%)
	3. Private	444 (7.1%)	
Socioeconomic level of school	1. Low	720 (11.5%)	6272
	2. Medium low	2282 (36.4%)	(100.0%)
	3. Medium	1383 (22.1%)	
	4. Medium high	1309 (20.9%)	
	5. High	578 (9.2%)	

Methods

The data has a hierarchical structure of students nested in schools, so the model estimation is performed in a multilevel (random effects) framework. This modeling approach lets us correctly estimate individual and contextual effects in a single model. We estimate cumulative link mixed models for the ordinal dependent variables, whereas we use linear mixed effects models for the average index of inequality justification.

The hypotheses of this research were pre-registered in the Open Science Framework platform of the Center for Open Science (OSF), the access to the document is available at this link. The statistical analysis of this research was performed using the free software R version 4.1.3.

Analysis

Descriptive analysis

Figure 3 shows a series of graphs depicting the association between the variables of market justice preferences - in education, health, and pensions - and the variables of meritocratic perception at school (effort and talent) and in society (effort, talent, and deservingness) (see conceptual diagram in Figure 2). On the left, we observe the social meritocracy diagrams, while on the right the school meritocracy diagrams are shown. For the three variables of perception of meritocracy in society the relationship is clear, since the average of market justice preferences increases the more there is agreement that people are rewarded for their effort, merit, and talent. This relationship needs to be clarified in the case of the variables of perception of meritocracy at school. To the extent that there is more agreement that the perception of talent is essential for obtaining good grades, the average of market justice preferences increases, but this relationship is not as clear as with the variables of meritocracy

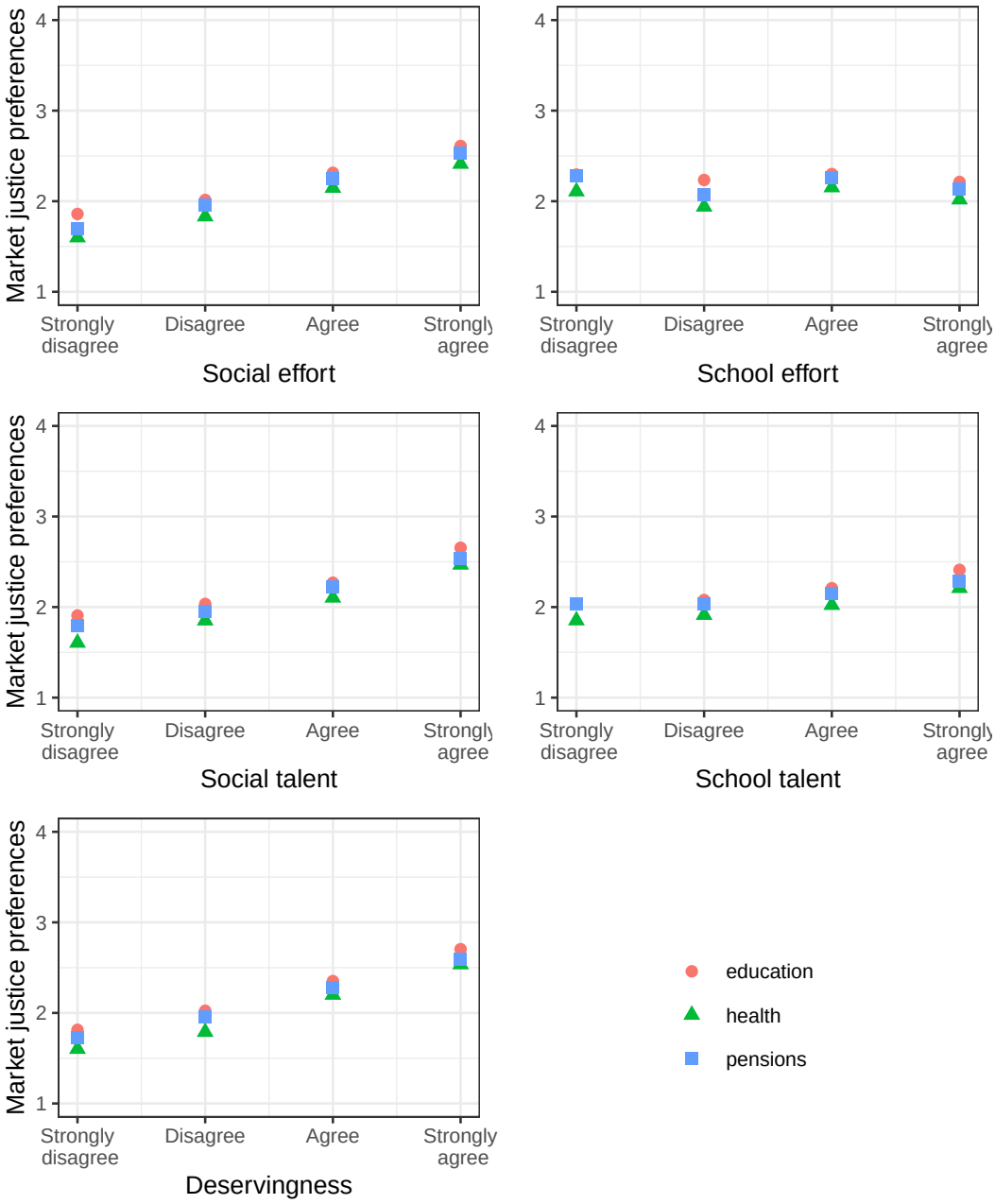

Figure 3: Market justice preferences in education, health and pensions by social and school meritocracy

in society. In addition, the graph does not show a clear trend in the relationship between the perception that effort is essential to obtain good grades and market justice preferences.

Cumulative link mixed models for the Justification of inequality in education, health and pensions

Three Cumulative link mixed models were estimated for the ordinal dependent variables of justice in differential access to pensions, education, and health according to income. Figure 4 shows the estimation of this regression model containing all the variables used in the study for the three dependent variables separately. However, this figure shows only the effect of meritocracy variables on society and school as independent variables. Complete models are available in the appendix.

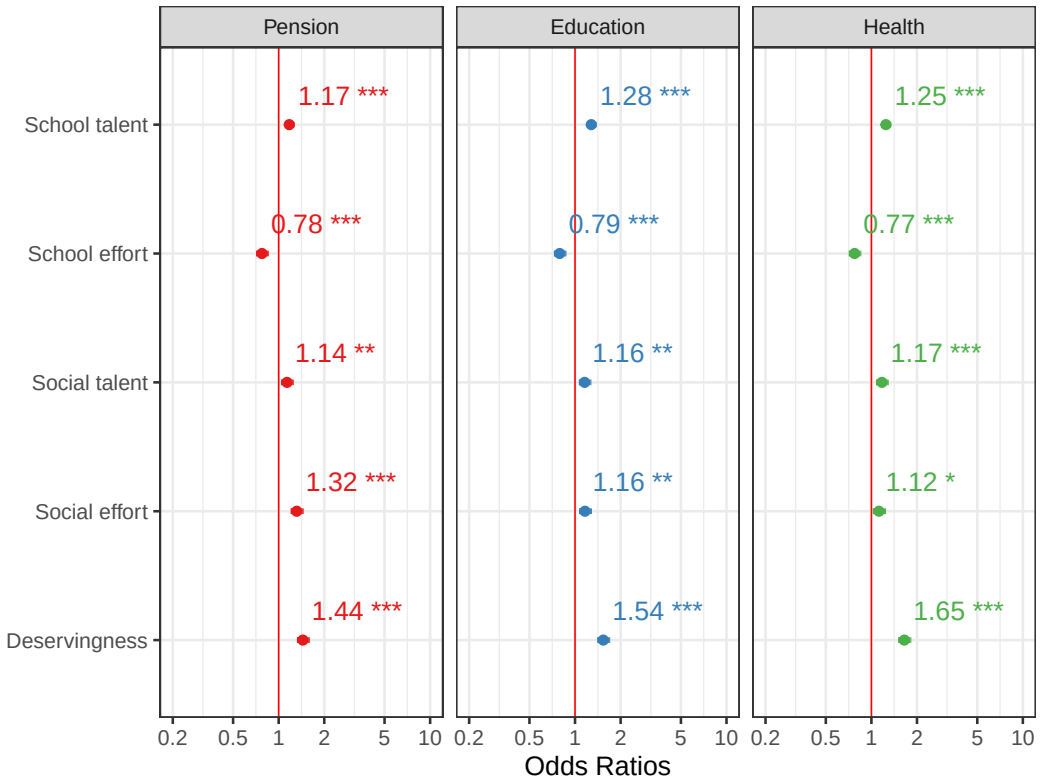

Figure 4: Odds-ratios of justification of education, pensions and health by social and school meritocracy

Figure 4 shows that for the three dependent variables of justice in differential access to pensions, education, and health, the trend is similar. In the context of school meritocracy, the effects

are mixed. As school talent increases, the justification for differentiated access to pensions, education, and health increases; on the contrary, as the school effort variable increases, the justification for differentiated access to pensions, education, and health decreases, keeping the rest of the independent variables constant. Regarding the variables of social meritocracy, the three variables of talent, effort, and deservingness show that as these increase, the justification for differentiated access to pensions, education, and health also increases.

Multilevel regression models for market justice preferences

Table 4 shows the results of the multilevel estimation for justice market preferences. For this variable, the intraclass correlation obtained shows that the variation between schools corresponds to 4% of the variation of students' preferences. This means that there is low variance between schools and therefore limits the possibilities of finding effects at the aggregate level.

Model 1 introduces social meritocratic variables: effort (whether efforts are rewarded), deservingness (people get what they deserve), and social talent (intelligence and skills are rewarded in society). In line with our hypotheses, the perception of a meritocratic society is positively related to the justification of inequality. Model 2 shows a mixed picture: while those perceiving that talent is rewarded also justify the inequality, the perception that effort is rewarded at school is negatively related to justification of inequality. Family background variables in Model 3 reveal that education and technology access are not related to justification of inequality, whereby we observe a negative impact of family cultural capital as measured by the number of books at home. While school socio-structural variables added in Model 4 show no significant effects, average achievement scores in the SIMCE test depict a negative relationship with the dependent variable, meaning that students that attend schools with better achievement scores on average justify less inequality.

In relation to model fit, when comparing the deviance with a model without predictors (null model), all the models have a statistically significant difference, with model 5 having the lowest deviance. According to Raudenbush and Bryk's (2002) estimate of R2, the level 1 variance of model 5 is 0.11 and the level 2 variance is 0.72. The total variance of model 5 according to Snijders and Bosker (2012) is 0.14.

Interactions effects

The interaction terms in Table 8 suggest that students' family background moderates the relationship between their meritocratic perceptions in Chile and their justification of inequality. The direction of these effects confirms our initial prediction. Thus, in line with our Hypothesis 3, the relationship between social effort and justification of inequality becomes less positive for those students whose parents achieved university or postgraduate education. That is, lower-status students (measured by parental education) justify more inequality when they adhere

Table 4: Individual effects of multilevel regression models

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	1.34***	1.37***
	(0.09)	(0.10)
School talent	0.11***	0.10***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
School effort	−0.12***	−0.12***
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Social talent	0.07***	0.07***
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Social effort	0.08***	0.08***
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Deservingness	0.20***	0.20***
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Parental education (Ref.= 8th grade or less)		
Secondary		−0.07
		(0.05)
Higher tec.		−0.10
		(0.05)
University or posgraduate		−0.02
		(0.05)
Missing		−0.00
		(0.05)
More than 25 books (Ref. Less than 25)		−0.05
		(0.03)
Technology access		0.01
		(0.01)
Deviance	12368.85	12355.60
Deviance Test (p)	0.00	0.00
AIC	12422.86	12468.36
BIC	12475.07	12572.78
Log Likelihood	−6203.43	−6218.18
Num. obs.	5047	5047
Num. groups: mrbd	231	231
Var: mrbd (Intercept)	0.02	0.02
Var: Residual	0.66	0.66

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Table 5

Table 6: Contextual effects of multilevel regression models

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	2.29***	1.42***
	(0.04)	(0.11)
Prop. university level at school	0.25	0.18
	(0.24)	(0.22)
Administrative dependence (Ref.= Public)		
Subsidized private	0.01	0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Private	−0.07	−0.08
	(0.14)	(0.13)
Socioeconomic level (Ref.= Low)		
SES Medium low	0.00	0.02
	(0.05)	(0.05)
SES Medium	−0.13	−0.03
	(0.07)	(0.06)
SES Medium high	−0.23*	−0.08
	(0.09)	(0.09)
SES High	0.09	0.25
	(0.17)	(0.15)
Achievement score (Ref.= Low)		
Simce Medium	−0.09*	−0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Simce High	−0.27***	−0.24***
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Deviance	12889.80	12306.45
Deviance Test (p)	0.00	0.00
AIC	12954.69	12473.31
BIC	13033.01	12636.48
Log Likelihood	−6465.35	−6211.66
Num. obs.	5047	5047
Num. groups: mrbd	231	231
Var: mrbd (Intercept)	0.02	0.01
Var: Residual	0.74	0.66

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 7

Table 8: Interactions effects

[H]

Variable	Market Justice Preferences				
	School talent	School effort	Social talent	Social effort	Deservingness
University or Postgraduate	-0.034	-0.012	-0.073.	-0.079*	-0.118**
More than 25 books	-0.015	-0.046	-0.029	-0.081**	-0.035
School SES high	0.004	0.001	-0.057.	-0.063*	-0.08**
Prop. university level	0.008	-0.021	-0.123	-0.171*	-0.162.
Simce Medium	0.001	0.032	-0.037	-0.041	-0.082*
Simce High	-0.016	0.008	-0.043	-0.063.	-0.087*

Note: ***p $<$ 0.001, **p $<$ 0.01, *p $<$ 0.05

more strongly to deservingnessmeritocratic perceptions in Chile. This result confirms the enlightenment thesis (see above). The same moderating effect is observed for students' family cultural capital: the relationship between effort (but not deservingness nor social talent) and justification of inequality becomes less positive for students with more than 25 books at home. Interestingly, family cultural capital also moderates the relationship between meritocratic beliefs at school (as measured by students' belief that effort is important to get good grades) and justification of inequality.

At the school level, we also observe moderating effects of school status and students' meritocratic beliefs over their justification of inequality. Thus, in line with our Hypothesis 5, high-status schools justify less inequality when, on average, their students have a greater perception of meritocracy in Chile, as measured by the three indicators we used (i.e., effort, deservingness, and talent). Finally, as we stated in Hypothesis 7, low-achieving schools justify more inequality when their students have, on average, stronger meritocratic beliefs in Chile. In Figure 5 we depict this moderating effect of school achievement for the relationship between deservingness and justification of inequality. We did not observe these moderating effects at the school level for students' meritocratic beliefs in the school (i.e., the idea that effort or talent are important to get good grades).

Conclusion

- Efecto ilustrador de la educación? (esfuerzo -> redistribución)

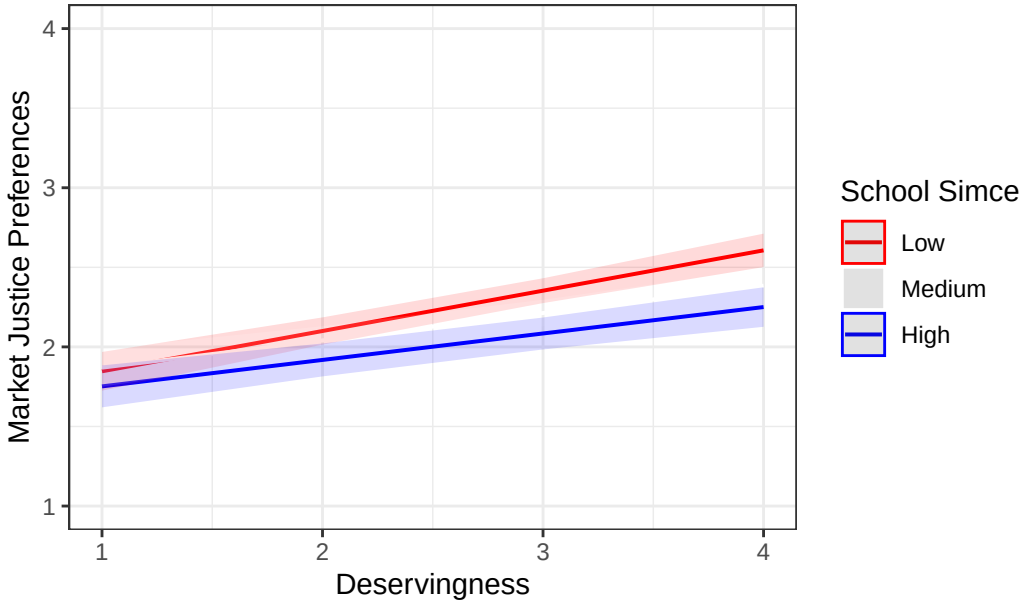

Figure 5: Interaction between deservingness and justification of inequality by school SIMCE achievement

Appendix

English translation	Original Spanish
It is just that in Chile people who cna pay have a better education for their children	Es justo que en Chile las personas que puedan pagar tengan una mejor educación para sus hijos.
It is just that in Chile people with higher incomes can have better pensions than people with low incomes	Es justo que en Chile las personas con mayores ingresos puedan tener mejores pensiones que las personas de ingresos más bajos
It is just that in Chile people with higher incomes can access better health services than people with low incomes	Es justo que en Chile las personas con mayores ingresos puedan acceder a una mejor atención de salud que las personas con ingresos más bajos

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