

School Choice in Chile:
An Analysis of Parental Preferences and Search Behavior

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Gregory Elacqua
Escuela de Gobierno
Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez

National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
Box 181, 525 West 120th Street,
New York, NY 10027

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Abstract: Skeptics of school choice are concerned that parents, especially low-income parents, will not choose schools based on sound academic reasoning. Many fear that, given a choice, parents will sort themselves into different schools along class lines. Most surveys find that parents of all socioeconomic groups cite academic aspects as important when choosing a school. Moreover, almost no parents refer to the social composition of the student body. These results may not be reliable since they are simply responses to survey items rather than actual behavior. We monitor the actual behavior of parents in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Chile, by examining how they construct their school choice sets. By observing the search behavior of parents, we are able to go beyond the survey data where parents are likely to mention socially acceptable school preferences. The data indicates that parents' decisions are influenced by demographics rather than academic performance. Based on this evidence, we argue that unfettered choice may reduce the pressure on schools to improve their performance and could potentially lead to more stratified schools.

Gregory Elacqua
Escuela de Gobierno
Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez
Avda. Diagonal Las Torres 2640
Peñalolén, Santiago, Chile
gregory.elacqua@uai.cl

INTRODUCTION

Expanding school choice is one of the major themes of current educational reform initiatives. In countries on every continent, governments have determined that giving parents more options among schools is an appropriate policy response to local educational problems (Wolf and Macedo, 2004; Plank and Sykes, 2003). The proponents of school choice have argued that many benefits will flow from empowering parents to choose the schools their children attend, ranging from increasing the efficiency of schools (Hoxby, 2000) to improving the education of the most disadvantaged students in the worst performing schools (Sugarman, 1999) to improving the satisfaction of parents and students with the schools their children attend (Goldring and Shapira, 1993).

However, as the push for school choice has intensified, a series of critiques have identified the costs of choice. Perhaps the most persistent criticism is that choice increases the risk of stratification by class (Henig, 1994; Levin, 1998). Research has identified two ways choice can lead to stratified schools. First, families can differ in their motivation to utilize choice. Most empirical studies of school choice confirm that choosers are disproportionately higher-income, higher-socioeconomic status, and higher-ability than non-choosers.¹

The second way that choice can increase stratification by class is through parental preferences (Ascher et al., 1996; Smith and Meier, 1995). School choice might lead to stratified schools if parents' school preferences differ systematically by socioeconomic status. Thus, our central question is whether or not, given choice, parents will sort themselves into different schools along class lines.

¹ For the United States see, for example, Epple et al. (2004). For New Zealand, see Fiske and Ladd (2000). For Scotland, see Willms (1996). For Chile, see Hseih and Urquiola (2003).

Most studies that have focused on the implications of family preferences on stratification usually suffer from thin data (Wells, 1996) or rely solely on survey responses (Schneider et al. 2000; *Centro de Estudios Publicos*, 1997) rather than observe parental choice behavior, which often yields different results (Weiher and Tedin, 2002; Henig, 1996).

This study focuses on the effect of differing preferences on school stratification by class. We study the behavior of first grade parents in the Metropolitan Region (R.M.) of Santiago, Chile. Using face-to-face interviews conducted with a random sample of parents, we analyze the distribution of preferences. In addition to the parental survey data, we collected objective indicators for each school in a parents stated choice set. With these data, we have a means of determining whether parental choice behavior is congruent with their stated preferences. Analysis of the data in Chile suggests that unfettered school choice may lead to more stratified schools.

SCHOOL CHOICE IN CHILE

The Chilean education system provides a unique institutional context in which to explore parental behavior when given choice. During the 1980s the school system in Chile experienced a sweeping reform program enacted by the military government (1973-1990). First, the government decentralized the administration of schools, transferring responsibility for public school management from the Ministry of Education to local municipalities. Second, the government altered the financing of public and most private schools. Public schools continued to be funded centrally, but municipalities started to receive a per-student payment for every child attending their schools. As a result,

enrollment losses came to have a direct effect on their education budgets. Most importantly, private schools that did not charge tuition began receiving the same per-student payment as the public schools. Tuition-charging private schools mostly continued to operate without public funding.

The reform sparked a massive redistribution across private and public schools, as well as the creation of many new private schools. In 1980, 14% of Chilean K-12 students attended private schools that received some public subsidy, and another 6% attended more elite, unsubsidized private schools. By 1990, 34% of students attended private voucher schools. By 2003, enrollment in such schools had reached about 38% of total enrollment. Most of these gains were at the expense of public school enrollments. Adding in the 9% of students in elite private non-voucher schools leaves a slight majority of Chilean students in public schools (see Figure 1). In the more densely populated areas, particularly in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, total private school enrollment (voucher and non-voucher) is much higher, closer to 65%.

Figure 1 Here

The students who enroll in each type of school are different in many respects. Those attending private voucher and private non-voucher schools come from families that have much higher incomes, on average, and are headed by parents with substantially more schooling (see Table 1). Private voucher schools are both religious (mostly Catholic) and non-religious. The latter, mostly for-profit schools, account for approximately one-fourth of private voucher school enrollment (Elacqua, 2004). For-

profit voucher schools also accounted for most of the substantial growth of the private enrollment share after 1980.

Table 1 Here

Finally, it is worth noting that the essential features of this system have remained in place for almost a quarter-century. The center-left coalition in power since 1990 has chosen to focus on improving the quality of poor primary schools through direct resource investments, while maintaining the organizational and funding components of choice introduced in the eighties (OECD, 2004).

CAN PARENTS MAKE GOOD CHOICES?

One of the key issues that must be examined in order to understand the effects of school choice in Chile is whether or not parents will select schools on educationally sound or on non-academic dimensions of schools that they value. Critics argue that parents do not have the ability to make good choices. Consider a Twentieth Century Fund report. The authors argued that parents are not “natural ‘consumers’ of education” and that “few parents of any social class appear willing to acquire the information necessary to make active and informed educational choices” (Ascher et al., 1996: 40-41). The Carnegie Foundation (1992) concluded that parents will base their decisions on non-academic aspects of education, including the availability of day care, sports, and other extracurricular activities. In contrast to this broad indictment of parental search behavior, more commonly the argument about parent information levels focuses on potential race and class biases in the quality of parental decisions. Some are concerned that parents,

especially low-income parents, will fail to choose schools based on academic quality. Rather, choice skeptics argue that these parents are more likely to embrace non-academic school attributes (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Ascher et al., 1996).

Here, the concern is that if low-income families choose schools based on non-academic factors while high-income parents focus their choice of schools on measurable performance indicators, then schools will become more stratified as higher income families choose better performing schools, leaving the children of lower income parents behind in low performing schools. Thus, many analysts who criticize choice argue that not only will less educated parents have great difficulty making good decisions about schools but the differences in decision making capabilities will directly lead to increased social stratification as well (Bridge, 1978; Levin, 1989; Henig, 1994).

While this debate has focused on the concern for low-income parents' preferences for non-academic dimensions, there is another aspect worth examining that may also increase stratification.² If higher income families are concerned about their children's peer groups, will school choice exacerbate stratification by class? If wealthier parents select schools on the basis of student class composition despite a school's academic performance, the outcome could be highly stratified schools chosen on the basis of class rather than academic achievement, with adverse learning outcomes. As Buckley and Schneider (2002) note "to the extent that demographics displaces academic performance in the choices of higher status parents, this could lower pressure on schools to enhance performance – negating one of the promises of choice" (p. 6).

² A parallel line of research, beyond the scope of this paper, examines the choice of courses selected by high school students. Most research suggests that minority students disproportionately enroll in non-academic courses (Ravitch, 1996; OECD, 2004 for Chile). Some suggest that this increases stratification across the system.

An even more disconcerting effect of parent's choosing on the basis of student body characteristics is the adverse effects it could have on learning outcomes. A body of literature has documented the importance of peer effects on educational achievement (Zimmer and Toma, 2000; Hoxby, 2000a). There are positive spillover effects of having high-ability peers and negative effects of being surrounded by disadvantaged students, who often pressure each other away from learning (Cook and Ludwig, 1998). Thus, if parents are concerned about demographics, their choices could potentially lead to greater stratification and the separation of low-ability, low-socioeconomic status children from more motivated peers with higher academic aspirations.

SURVEY DATA SUPPORT THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC QUALITY

Most surveys find that parents across the board say that their choice of schools is motivated by academic quality. There are numerous examples. Armor and Peiser (1998) found that in the Massachusetts inter-district choice program, parents cited academic quality as the most important when making a choice. They also found few differences in the distribution of parental preferences across ethnic groups. Similarly, both Greene et al. (1998), in Cleveland, Ohio, and Kleitz et al. (2000), in Texas, found that parents of all racial and income groups stressed academic dimensions in their list of what they thought was important about schools. Tedin and Weiher (2002) found similar results in charter school parents in Texas. Furthermore, Schneider et al. (2000) found that the preference for academic aspects was even stronger among low-income families and racial minorities as it was for other parents.

Survey data in Chile also show that the preference for academic aspects is strong. The *Centro de Estudios Públicos* (1997) report that when asked about the dimensions parents value most when choosing a school, over 50% of parents surveyed cited academic quality. This finding conforms with the more recent survey data reported by the Ministry of Education (2000, 2001, 2003, 2003) in which academic aspects were the second most valued preference when choosing a school after location. These surveys find little difference by education level in the preferences of parents, with the exception of location, which is cited more by parents with less than a high school education. Moreover, one of the least important concerns for parents in both surveys was that their children attend schools with students who are predominantly of the same social class. This is consistent with survey evidence in the United States (Weiher and Tedin, 2002; Schneider et al. 2000).

WHAT DO PARENTS WANT FROM SCHOOLS IN CHILE?

These patterns are also found in the responses of first grade parents in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago (R.M.), Chile. In the spring of 2004, we conducted face-to-face interviews with 536 first grade parents in the R.M. to explore the effects of school choice on parental behavior. We chose first grade parents because this is the point at which all parents must make a choice about which school to enroll their child. Therefore, it is the point at which the incentives to gather information about the schools is at the highest and is a critical point around which the entire system of choice hinges.

We constructed the sample frame by first stratifying schools by size, socioeconomic status, and school type (public, private voucher, private non-voucher).

Then, blocks within the schools were selected and finally first grade parents within the schools were randomly selected from lists provided by the Ministry of Education. The sample was weighted to bring the proportions of the strata into agreement with their representation in the population. Table 2 reports the demographic data for our sample of first grade parents in the R.M. by school type.³

Table 2 Here

To examine what parents want from schools, in our survey instrument, we asked an open-ended question: “Parents choose schools for their children for different reasons. What was the most important reason for choosing you child’s school?” We recoded these answers into 8 categories.

We begin by studying two dimensions that concern this debate in Chile: education level and school type. We examine the following two questions: Does the level of education affect what parents value in schools? Does school type make a difference? Finally, we present a multivariate analysis to sort out the independent effects of each demographic variable.

Parents, Across All Groups, Value Academic Quality

In figure 2 we present data on the importance of different attributes of schools held by parents of different education levels. Note that almost every category that parents mention are important to the quality of education and, contrary to what critics of choice

³ For a more detailed description of the sample design and survey instruments see Elacqua (forthcoming).

argue, with the exception of location, parents almost never mention non-educational dimensions such as day care and extracurricular activities.

Figure 2 Here

For example, consistent with other surveys, parents value academic and curricular aspects, with almost 50 percent of parents of all educational levels giving this response. Note that the differences among parents by education level are relatively minor in most categories. The only significant difference between these groups is that parents without a high school education are much more likely to emphasize location and cost than high school and college educated parents and less likely to mention values.

At this point it is important to note that almost no parents refer to the social composition of the student body, and facilities does not make the list. It is also interesting to note that despite the importance that researchers, policymakers and unions have given to class and school size as an important goal for education reform, very few parents considered this indicator important in their choice of a school.

Figure 3 displays the differences between public and private school parents. Public school parents are less likely to emphasize academic aspects and are more sensitive to the location and cost of schools than private school parents. Also note the extent to which private voucher and non-voucher parents stress morals and values. Given that over one-third of private schools are religious, this is clearly reasonable (Elacqua, 2004).

Figure 3 Here

In short, our results are consistent with other survey data that show that parents, with different levels of education and with children enrolled in public and private schools, consistently emphasize the importance of academic aspects of schools.

Multivariate Analysis of Parental Preferences

The weakness of these data is that they only account for bivariate relationships. Table 3 presents multivariate probit estimates. Each model estimates the influence of independent variables on the probability that a respondent will cite a particular factor in his or her choice of a school.

Here we examine whether or not demographics affect preferences. We model parental preferences as a function of a set of parental characteristics that have been found to affect choice behavior (Schneider et al. 2000). Specifically, we specify the following probit model:

Prob (Parental Preferences) = f (SES, school type, employment status, gender, proximity, church attendance, length of residence)

Where:

- SES is the total number of years of education completed.
- School type is represented by (1) a dummy variable indicating whether the parent has chosen a private voucher school or public school (private voucher =1) and (2) a dummy variable indicating whether the parent has chosen a private non-voucher school or public school (private non-voucher = 1).

- Employment status is a dummy variable indicating whether the parent works outside the home (employed = 1).
- Gender is a dummy variable indicating if the parent is female (female =1).
- Proximity is measured by whether or not a student walks to school (walks=1).
- Church attendance is a categorical variable measuring the frequency of a parent's church attendance (1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = only on the major holidays; 4 = about twice a year. 5 = every other month; 6 = about once a month; 7 = about every two weeks; 8 = about once a week).⁴
- Length of residence is a continuous variable measuring the number of years a parent has lived in a municipality.

Table 3 Here

The results presented in Table 3 confirm most of the bivariate patterns. First, our data confirm that public school parents and parents with less than a high school education are more likely to rank location and cost as important. Second, private school parents are much more likely to emphasize values than public school parents. Finally, returning to the main point: contrary to the common belief that parents with lower social status do not value academic quality, our data show that there are no significant differences among parents who value academic aspects.

While voucher advocates would take this as proof that school choice is mainly driven by academic aspects and that it will not lead to greater stratification by class –

⁴ Church attendance is included as a general measure of involvement with the social life of a community and school-based activities (Schneider, 1997) and for teaching moral values (Weiher and Tedin, 2002).

these results may not be reliable since they are simply responses to survey items rather than actual behavior. Parents may feel pressured to say what is socially acceptable in an interview. Even open-ended questions do little to overcome the social stigma attached to the expression of socially based preferences. In addition, parents are expected to be concerned with academic aspects of their children's schools. These social pressures may cause parents to avoid citing social class as a choice preference, and to emphasize educational dimensions. Given these concerns, parental behavior is a better measure of preferences than survey responses.

STATED PREFERENCES VS. ACTUAL BEHAVIOR

The literature on actual parental behavior is by no means extensive. Henig (1996), for instance, finds in a study of enrollment patterns in Maryland, that parents were concerned with the racial and social composition of their children's schools. Henig found that white families were more likely to choose schools with higher percentages of white students, while minority groups tended to choose schools with higher proportions of low-income minority students.

Similar to Henig's findings, Wieher and Tedin (2002) found evidence that, despite their stated preferences for test scores, parents transfer their children into lower-performing schools. And though no parents cite race as being a factor in choosing a school, parents were likely to transfer their children into schools with children of the same race. Fossey (1994) and Armor and Peiser (1998) found that parents who exercised choice were more likely to transfer into wealthier districts. However, they were also

enrolling their children in higher performing districts, which directly contradict Weiher and Tedin's (2002) findings.

In their study of search behavior in Washington, D.C., Buckley and Schneider (2002) found evidence that the survey responses were not consistent with results based on other forms of data collection. By observing the search behavior of parents on a web based school information system, they found that parents reveal a different set of preferences than they state in surveys. Their data show that parents are much more concerned with school demographics than they admit in surveys.

In short, almost all survey data finds that parents, across the board, say they choose schools for academic reasons and few admit to being concerned about the racial or class composition of the student body. However, these survey data are not consistent with actual parental behavior, where researchers have found that parents care about race and class.

SEARCH BEHAVIOR IN CHILE

In our research, we monitor the actual behavior of parents by examining how they construct their choice sets. By observing the search behavior of parents, we are able to go beyond the survey data where parents are likely to mention socially acceptable school preferences.

To investigate how parents construct their choice sets, in our survey we asked parents to list the schools they considered before choosing their current school. Our data

show that over half of the parents surveyed considered only one school (their current school).⁵

In the next stage of analysis we analyze the choice sets of parents that considered more than one school. With this information we have the means of comparing not only the types of schools parents consider, but also whether the chosen school is objectively the best school in their choice set.

In addition to the parental survey data, we collected objective indicators for each of the schools in the choice set. These data fall into three domains. The first domain is associated with the educational performance of the schools in the choice set: mathematics and reading standardized test scores. The second domain reflects the schools' values: public or private and religious or secular. A third set of attributes focuses on the demographic make-up of the student populations in terms of education and income. With these data, we are able to examine how much variance was represented in the characteristics of the schools in the choice set. Thus we are able to better understand the place of demographics versus academics in parental preferences.

How do parents construct their choice set?

Figure 4 presents descriptive data on the characteristics of schools in parents' choice sets. First, we examined the variance in the academic achievement of schools in the choice set. As discussed above, most survey data show that parents across the board are academically motivated in choosing their schools. Thus we would not expect parents to consider schools in their choice sets that vary significantly in their academic quality. In

⁵ There are no defining characteristics of parents who consider more than one school. Education level, school type, and the density of the supply of schools available in the local municipality do not affect the number of schools considered (Elacqua, forthcoming).

the analysis that follows, we determined whether or not schools vary in quality by examining whether test scores differed systematically across the schools they considered. Specifically, if the average test score of the lowest performing school considered was more than a one standard deviation distance from the highest performing school in the choice set, we considered the quality of schools in the choice to set to vary. Our data show that parents are considering schools that differ significantly in their academic quality. For instance, more than 60 percent of parents consider schools in their choice sets with large variations in their test scores.

Figure 4 Here

Nonetheless, this may not be so important if parents are choosing the highest performing school in their choice set. To investigate this we examined whether or not the school actually chosen had a higher test score than the other schools in the choice set. Our data show that only one out of four parents chose the best school in their choice sets. In sum, our data suggest that stated preferences for academic performance are not consistent with actual behavior.

Second, we explored the values of the schools in the choice set. To examine school values we compared school types (private voucher, private non-voucher or public) and the religious orientation of the schools in parents' choice sets. Our data show that over half of the parents surveyed only consider the matching school types in their choice sets, and over 60 percent of parents only look at schools with the same religious affiliation (see Figure 4). This evidence is consistent with the survey data where parents, especially private school parents, cite values as an important school attribute.

Finally, as noted earlier, almost no parents in the survey mentioned student demographics as a choice factor. However, these stated preferences are often not congruent with observed parent behavior, where researchers have found significant effects of class. To investigate whether there is a mismatch between parental stated preferences and their behavior, we examine whether or not the parents' choice sets included schools with diverse student demographics. We used the student demographic categories the Ministry of Education assigns to each school (see Table 1). Rather than reflecting the survey data that shows that individuals are not concerned with social class, we found that the majority of parents (almost 90 percent) only consider schools with similar student demographics in their choice sets (see Figure 4). Thus, while in surveys parents hardly ever say that social class matters, these factors do appear to matter when we use a different research technique.

In figure 5, we present data on the choice sets of parents with different levels of education. There are few differences between these groups. Note that parents with a college education are more likely to consider schools with diverse religious affiliations than are less educated parents. Analysis of figure 6 suggests that there are some significant differences between public and private school parents. Public school parents are more likely to consider schools in their choice sets that vary significantly in quality. Public school parents are also more likely to consider different school types (public and private) in their choice sets and less likely to look at schools with different religious affiliations (they only consider secular schools) than private (voucher and non-voucher) school parents.

Figure 5 Here

Figure 6 Here

It is interesting to note that the data presented in figures 5 and 6 show that parents across the board are only considering schools with similar student demographics, suggesting that parents care about class much more than they admit to when responding to surveys.

Next, we need to sort out the individual and contextual aspects of constructing a choice set. Table 4 presents the multivariate probit estimates. See above for a description of the independent variables.

Multivariate Analysis of Choice Sets

Table 4 reports the change in probability of constructing a choice sets with shared characteristics. The multivariate analysis confirms the independent effects of some of the conditions presented in the earlier figures. Public school parents are more likely to consider diverse school types and schools with the same religious orientation than private school parents. Table 4 also verifies that student demographics are important to parents across the board. However, table 4 also shows that, after controlling for independent effects, public school parents are no more likely than private school parents to construct choice sets with schools that vary significantly in quality (test scores). Table 4 also demonstrates that private voucher school parents are more likely to choose the best school in their choice set than public school parents.

Table 4 Here

In sum, the schools in parent's choice sets share some common characteristics. For example, most parents consider schools in their choice sets with similar student demographics. Conversely, test scores differ systematically across the schools they considered, and most parents do not choose the highest performing school in their choice set. These findings suggest that stated preferences in surveys are not congruent with actual behavior.

CONCLUSION

Critics of school choice are concerned that parents, especially low-income parents, will not choose schools based on sound academic reasoning. Therefore, they argue that choice will increase stratification as high-income parents choose high performing schools and low-income parents are left behind in the lower performing schools. These arguments are at odds with most survey evidence that shows that parents across the board value academic aspects when choosing a school.

These patterns are replicated in the responses of first grade parents in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Chile. For example, consistent with other surveys, parents with different education levels cite academic aspects as being important in their choice of a school. Consequently, the research reported here provides little grounds for thinking that there are systematic differences in the preferences of parents by class.

The subsequent analysis indicates that relying on survey data to better understand parental preferences can lead to an overly optimistic conclusion. Although most parents say that educational dimensions matter in their choice of schools for their children and

almost never admit to caring about student demographics, when using a different research technique we find different results.

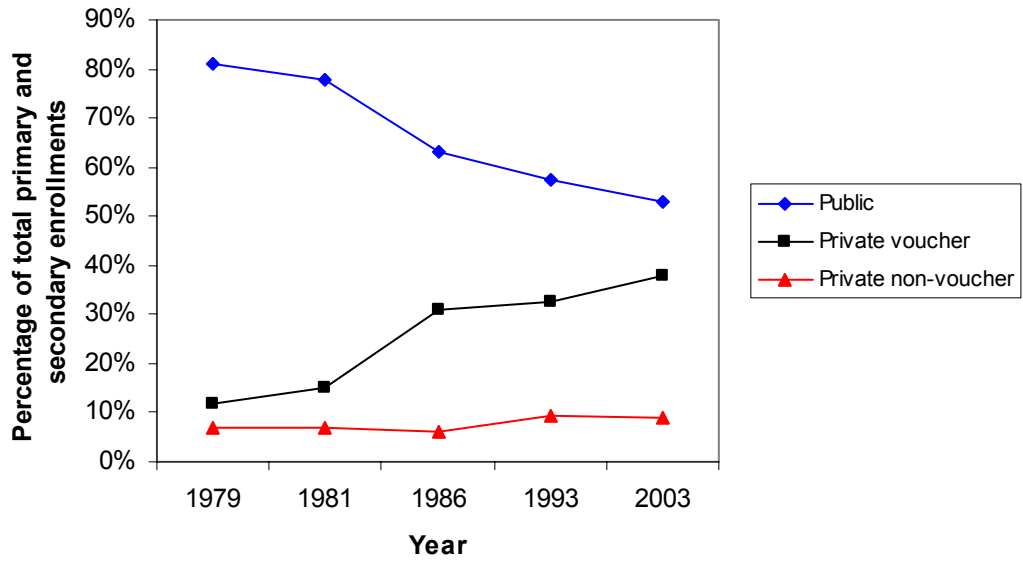
Stated preferences were checked by comparing the schools in a parents' choice set. The findings are revealing. First, though academic aspects are the most important attribute cited for choosing a school, our data show that test scores differ systematically across the schools that parents considered. Furthermore, most parents do not choose the highest performing school in their choice sets. Second, though almost no parents cite social class as a choice factor, most only consider schools with similar student demographics in their choice sets.

Voucher advocates argue that school choice will unleash competitive pressure on the schools to make them improve. Moreover, parents should be able to choose the school that delivers the kind of education they want for their children. Proponents argue that choice will lead to higher parental satisfaction with schools they choose because it increases the ability of parents to match their preferences for specific values, needs or pedagogical approaches with the school. Clearly this is a desirable goal. But if, as our data in Chile indicate, parents' decisions are influenced by student demographics rather than academic performance, unrestricted school choice will likely lead to undesirable outcomes.

To the extent that choice is driven by demographics rather than school achievement, unregulated choice programs, such as Chile's, may actually reduce the pressure on schools to improve their performance and increase pressure to "improve" the student demographics. In Chile, schools can choose among its applicants and shape the nature of its student body. It can take the smartest students and those from high-income

families and refuse applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, if educational markets are driven by consumer preferences, and parents care about student demographics, unfettered school choice will likely increase stratification.

Figure 1: Enrollment share in public and private schools, 1979-2003



Source: Ministry of Education

Figure 2: What parents say is important by education level

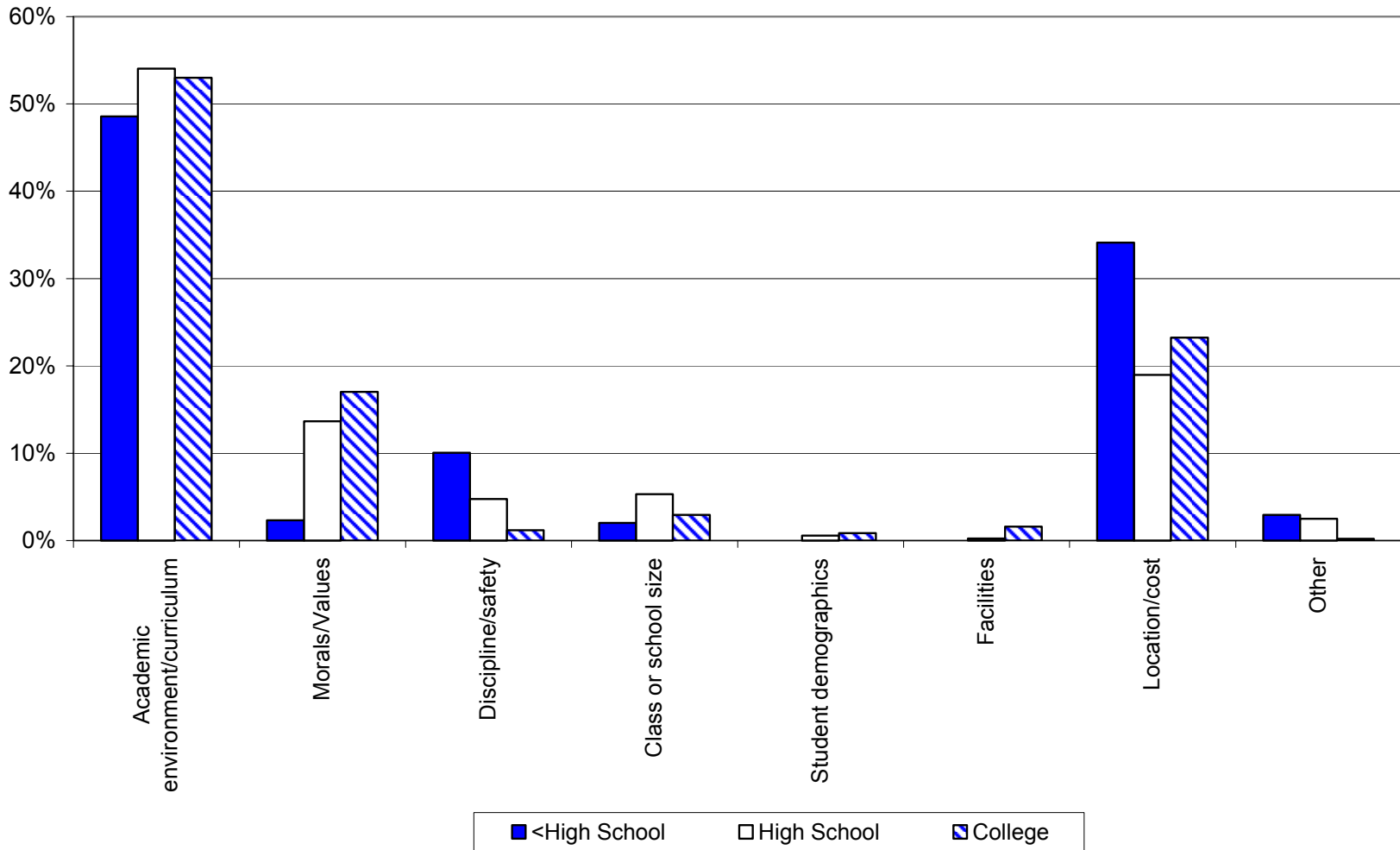


Figure 3: What parents say is important by school type

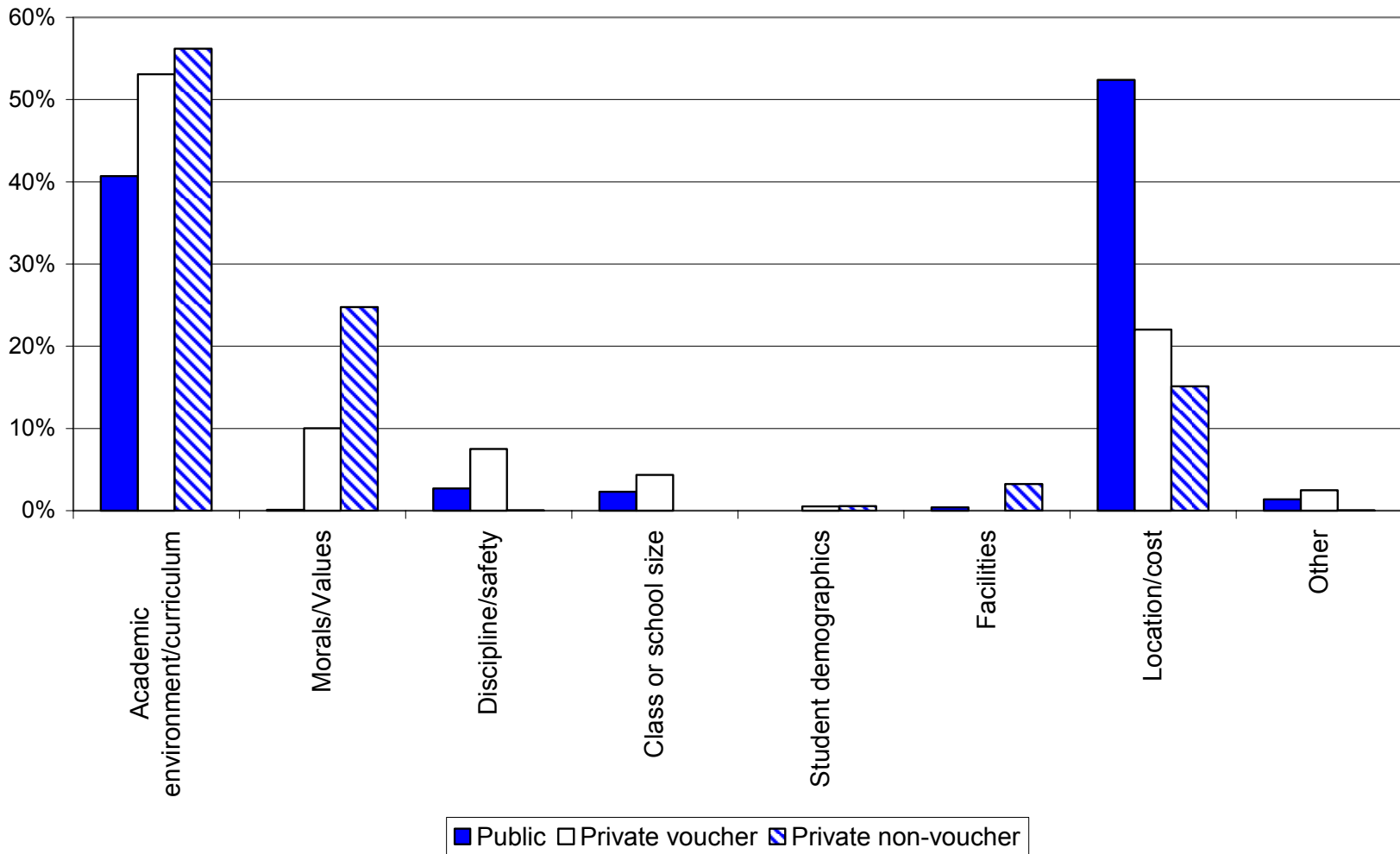


Figure 4: What common characteristics do schools share?

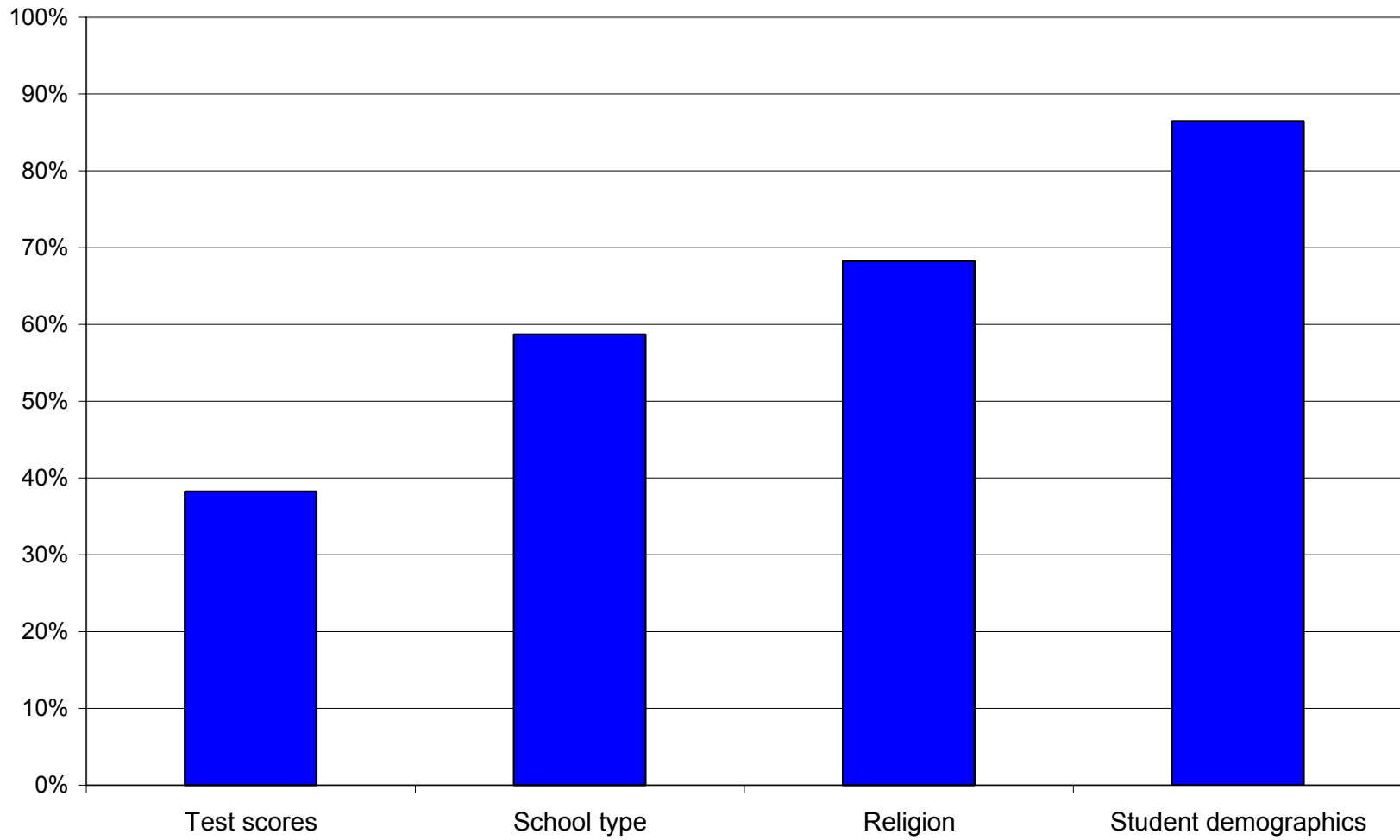


Figure 5: Common characteristics in choice set by education level

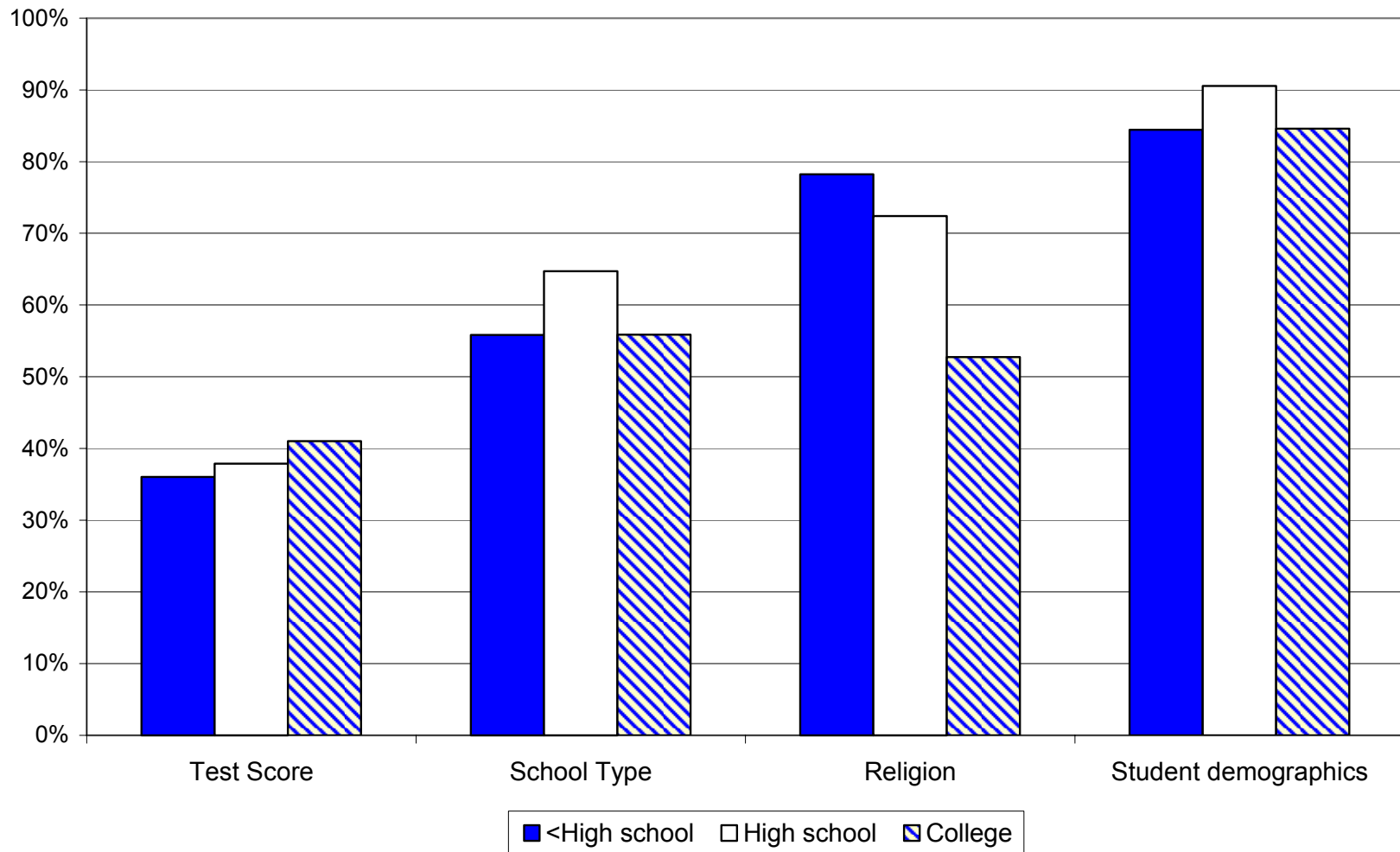


Figure 6: Common characteristics in choice set by school type

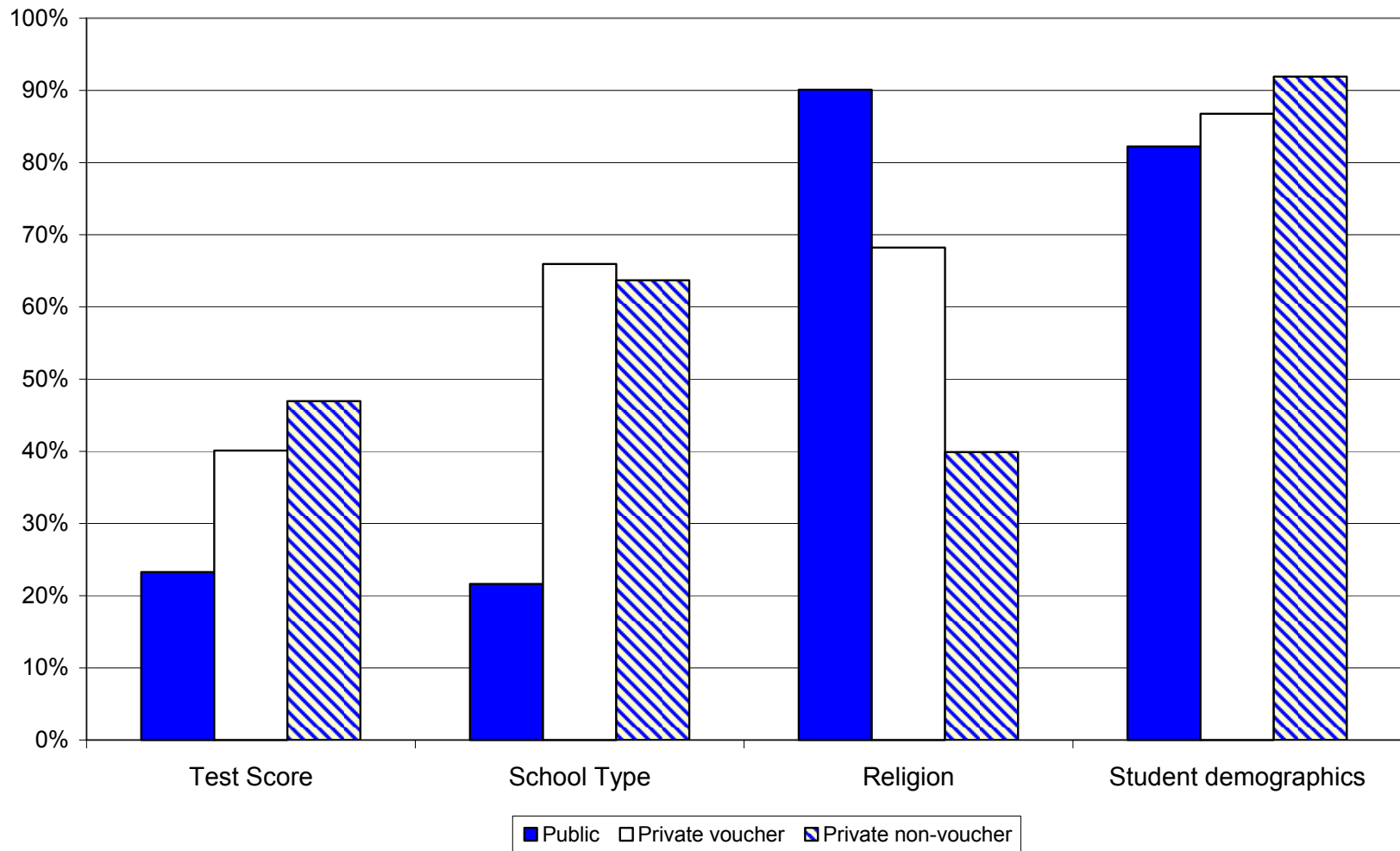


Table 1: Characteristics of socioeconomic groups and distribution of enrollment by school type, 2003

Socio-Economic group	Mothers' years of education	Monthly Income (\$US)	Family monthly expenditure on education (\$US)	Enrollment and % in public schools	Enrollment and % in private voucher schools	Enrollment and % in private non-voucher schools	Number and % of group over total enrollment
A Low	7	\$174	\$17	22,324 79.4%	5,775 20.6%	0 0%	28,099 (10%) 100%
B Low middle	9	\$224	\$20	71,607 81.9%	15,788 18.1%	0 0%	87,395 (32%) 100%
C Middle	11	\$338	\$33	48,116 47.6%	52,855 52.3%	0 0%	100,993 (37%) 100%
D High middle	13	\$676	\$73	5,132 13.0%	32,140 81.6%	2,131 5.4%	39,403 (14%) 100%
E High	16	\$2,163	\$237	0 0%	1,159 6.1%	17,815 93.9%	18,974 (7%) 100%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003

Table 2: Sample demographics

	Public	Private voucher	Private non-voucher
No. of first grade parents	208	224	104
Parent education <8 th grade	18.1%	8.6%	0.3%
8th grade	38.9%	29.8%	4.6%
High school	33.0%	37.9%	5.6%
College or more	9.9%	23.8%	89.5%
Average monthly household income before taxes (\$US)	\$265	\$424	\$2683
Car	28.0%	35.4%	90.7%
Employed	32.1%	32.4%	75.3%
Single parent	25.3%	19.9%	17.3%
Female	91.3%	87.9%	85.6%
Student walks to school	72.2%	63.3%	14.9%
Length of residence in municipality (years)	17.76	20.63	14.92

Table 3: The change in the probability of an aspect being named important

Variables	Academic environment/curriculum	Morals/values	Location/cost
High School	0.186 [0.45]	1.855*** [2.60]	-0.72** [1.96]
College	-0.195 [0.44]	1.488*** [2.65]	0.295 [0.70]
Private voucher	0.505 [1.30]	4.524*** [5.35]	-1.417*** [3.40]
Private non-voucher	0.340 [0.66]	5.327*** [4.93]	-1.69** [2.13]
Employed	0.191 [0.54]	0.379 [0.89]	-0.625 [1.39]
Female	-0.044 [0.11]	0.104 [0.23]	-0.28 [0.54]
Proximity	-0.640* [1.91]	-0.288 [0.72]	0.62* [1.75]
Church Attendance	-0.003** [2.14]	0.002 [0.91]	0.001 [0.51]
Length of Residence	-0.007 [0.64]	0.017 [0.98]	0.008 [0.71]
Constant	0.215 [0.34]	-8.555*** [7.26]	0.135 [0.23]
Observations	536	536	536
Pseudo R2	0.0357	0.1542	0.1100

Robust z statistics in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 4: The probability of constructing a consistent choice set and choosing the best school

Variables	Test scores	Chose Highest Performing School	School Type	Religion	Student demographics
High School	0.137 [0.26]	0.103 [0.20]	0.672 [1.12]	-0.555 [1.48]	0.667 [0.97]
College	0.150 [0.26]	-0.625 [0.61]	-0.542 [1.07]	-0.936 [1.55]	0.023 [0.04]
Private voucher	0.904 [1.49]	1.574* [1.89]	2.253*** [4.16]	-1.472** [2.37]	0.318 [0.58]
Private non-voucher	1.079 [1.39]	1.059 [0.95]	2.085** [2.46]	-1.805* [1.81]	1.408 [1.29]
Employed	-0.242 [0.58]	0.206 [0.35]	0.910* [1.79]	-0.128 [0.21]	-0.524 [0.78]
Female	0.575 [0.92]	1.498 [1.61]	0.776 [1.38]	-0.418 [0.58]	0.655 [0.69]
Proximity	-0.131 [0.22]	-1.111 [1.35]	-0.311 [0.57]	0.736 [1.33]	-0.458 [0.94]
Church Attendance	-0.002 [0.70]	0.006*** [3.05]	-0.010* [1.66]	0.007*** [2.61]	0.021* [1.71]
Length of Residence	-0.023** [2.01]	-0.014 [1.10]	-0.005 [0.27]	0.001 [0.09]	0.026 [0.88]
Constant	-1.266 [1.06]	-3.070* [1.66]	-2.116** [2.17]	2.494** [2.32]	0.490 [0.43]
Observations	240	240	240	240	240
Pseudo R2	0.0395	0.1175	0.1731	0.1205	0.0750

Robust z statistics in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

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