

# The relationship between class-based habitus and choice of university and field of study

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## ABSTRACT

Enrollments in higher education have expanded greatly, but without elimination of all forms of inequality. Research in industrialized countries has shown that the path students follow in their transition from secondary school continues to be associated with their social class. This study provides quantitative evidence of that relationship in a non-industrial country like Chile. Multinomial logistic and linear regression of university admission data managed by the Department of Evaluation, Measurement and Registration describing 130,000 applicants for the years 2015 and 2017 were used to estimate the probability of a member of a particular social class choosing a given university and academic field of study. The results show differences regarding law programs and science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs. Class differences were particularly important in the choice of university. Working-class students were more likely to apply to public universities, avoiding elite and especially private institutions. The findings provide further support for Bourdieu's habitus explanation of class reproduction. They suggest more attention to the level of segregation in Chilean higher education and the factors that produce it.