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**Conscious or Unconscious:
The Role of Education in Consciousness Raising among Chilean Youth**
Samsara Dávalos Reyes

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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Conscious or Unconscious: The Role of Education in Consciousness Raising among Chilean Youth

Samsara Dávalos Reyes
Trinity University- Senior Thesis

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate the question of how Chilean high school students in *liceos emblemáticos* and *liceos históricos* develop a critical consciousness about social justice issues. I examine how critical consciousness manifests itself in the second decade of the 21st century Chile and how, in turn, this critical consciousness leads to participation in national social movements. To further analyze this question, I utilize my field research, which was conducted through a qualitative approach. In May 2018, I conducted nine interviews with students and three with teachers at five of Santiago's emblematic and historic high schools and at a Valparaíso technical high school, as well observations in history classroom at three of these schools. I employ critical pedagogy as the analytical framework with which I make sense of the findings. Based on my analysis using Freire's concept of critical consciousness, I find that participants in these atypical schools demonstrate high levels of critical consciousness regarding matters of social justice. Students highlighted the socioeconomic diversity, social justice legacy, institutional culture, and passionate teachers in their current high schools as catalysts for raising critical social consciousness. Future research should continue to explore this topic as it relates traditional public schools.

“Ser joven y no ser revolucionario es una contradicción hasta biológica”

[To be young and not be revolutionary is a biological contradiction]

– Salvador Allende

The current Chilean education system is founded on strong neoliberal pillars that have resulted in the decentralization of the Chilean education system, a reframing of education as a social responsibility to an individual object of consumption, and the expansion of private-voucher schools. Together, these factors have contributed to the creation of a three-tiered system that is highly stratified by class with private schools catering to the higher strata, private-voucher schools fitting the needs of middle class families, and public schools serving lower income families. Despite functioning under a fragmented neoliberal system, Chilean students are actively vocal on matters of social justice. As shown by the historic 2006 Penguin Revolution and the current social movements to end sexist education, there is a strong fervent interest in social justice issues among portions of the Chilean youth. To further understand the development of interest in social justice issues and social awareness of social injustices, this study sought to explore the role that education has on the development of critical consciousness. I did so by asking what aspects of the formal education contribute to this process. By formal education, I am referring to both macro factors such as school funding, national curriculum, and standardized testing as well as micro determinants including teacher-student relationship, class size, and school culture. As I will later explain in this paper, critical consciousness is encompassing of both awareness as well as action on social justice issues. In the following paragraph, I will contextualize my research question by discussing the history of the Chilean education system in addition to examining the impact neoliberalism has had on Chilean education.

In terms of development, Chile has one of the strongest, most promising economies in Latin America but with a GINI coefficient of .45 it holds a high level of income inequality (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2016). In comparison to its neighboring countries, Chile stands out for its strong economy and relatively peaceful transition to democracy (Teichman 2011). Since the 1980s, Chile has seen a continuous economic growth of about seven percent annually and a steady decrease in poverty from 38.9 percent in 1990 to 18.4 percent in 2003 (Oxhorn 2011; Teichman 2011). In 2018, Chile's growing rate rounded at four percent bringing profits to the private sector (World Bank 2019). Many credit the adoption of neoconservative governance and neoliberal economic models during Pinochet's dictatorship and by the subsequent civilian *Concertación* governments (1990-2006) as the source of Chile's success. A result of the military regime's restructuring of the economy between 1973 and 1982 is an increase in the privatization of economic and social activities, withdrawal of the state from its regulatory and developmental functions, and adherence to free-market rational (Foxely 1986).

Similarly, neoliberalism is a political and economic philosophy that began to be put into practice in capitalist countries in the 1970s. It re-emphasizes the expansion of a free-market, the privatization of public goods, and the minimization of state intervention in non-political realms (Harvey 2005: 2). As a result of the newly drafted constitution in 1980, the neoliberal economic model institutionally gained a long-term position in Chilean government (Teichman 2011). Although this development model has produced incremental economic gains for the country overall, the accumulated wealth has not been evenly distributed among the different class sectors. On the contrary, these volatile market-like policies have ushered in unprecedented levels of inequality and weakening of social welfare programs (Oxhorn 2011). Even with the

return of democracy, the structural changes induced by the military's market model are present in Chile's institutions.

One of the most impacted state institutions has been Chile's education system. Neoliberalism in the Chilean education system led to the decentralization in administration of public schools and the growth of private-voucher schools. The first step in decentralization came through a process known as *municipalización* in which the decision-making and financing responsibilities of public schools were transferred from the Ministry of Education at the federal level to municipalities at the local government (Elacqua 2012; Elacqua et al 2011; Mizala and Torche 2012). In terms of financing, the municipalities enacted a universal voucher program that paid a per-pupil subsidy to all participating public or private-voucher schools (Mizala and Torche 2012; McEwan 2001). In this manner, both public and private-voucher schools are publicly funded by the state; however, private-voucher schools differentiate themselves in that they are able to charge an additional cost of attendance as well as are privately run. Over the years, the universal voucher program incentivized the establishment of new private-voucher schools and increased enrollment in private-voucher schools from 15 percent in 1981 to 43 percent in 2006 (Elacqua 2012). In 1993, the *financiamiento compartido* (shared financing) system permitted private-voucher schools to charge add-on fees not to exceed \$68 USD monthly (Mizala and Torche 2012). The expansion of this educational market has fomented social class stratification in the Chilean education system. Neoliberal educational policies have created a three-tiered education system where private non-voucher schools are exclusively for the elite, private voucher schools are primarily for the middle class, and public schools are predominantly for the lower class (Oxhorn 2011).

Recognizing the highly stratified and complex socio-historical development of Chile's current education system, this study seeks to understand how Chilean students come to form a conscious commitment to social justice. The research question guiding this study is the role that formal education plays in developing critical consciousness in Chilean youth? In addressing this question, I draw upon Paulo Freire's concept of *conscientização* or critical consciousness. For purposes of this study, critical consciousness is defined as an awareness for matters of social injustices and inequities in one's community and outside of it. To address this broad question, I will first delve deeper into the changes in the purpose and structure of education throughout Chilean history. More specifically, I will explore the impact that neoliberal educational policies have on the relationship between education and critical consciousness. In this study, I will explore the role that education's macro structural factors (i.e., school funding, national curriculum and standardized testing) and micro determinants (i.e., teacher-student relationships, class size, and school culture) play on the development of students' critical consciousness. Given the importance of identity development in adolescence, I focused primarily on older adolescents who are undergoing a form of exploration of their own identity, be it in terms of their socio-economic status, gender expression, sexuality, race and ethnicity, or nationality. In terms of critical consciousness, I am looking to the points of an adolescents' educational trajectory where they begin to experience a social, emotional, and political awakening. I will use *critical pedagogy* as the theoretical framework through which the development of critical consciousness and its relationship with education will be examined. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the applicability of critical pedagogy to this study and further define critical pedagogue Paulo Freire's critical consciousness.

RECENT HISTORY OF THE CHILEAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Throughout Chilean history, the structural changes within the education system have come as a result of ideological shifts with the change of government. Some of the more radical reforms can be seen in the transition between the progressive educational projects of the Frei and Allende governments to the conservative approach by Pinochet.

Frei's *revolución en libertad*

Eduardo Frei Montalva, centrist president of Chile from 1964 to 1970 and leader of the Christian Democratic Party, through his campaign project of *Revolución en Libertad* (Revolution in Liberty) sought to make profound structural changes in the Chilean government and society. He did so through education. Frei valued education as a tool of development and so invested twenty percent of the national budget in education, more than any subsequent government (Fischer 1979). Among these policy pursuits was the guaranteed access for all to primary and secondary education. Frei Montalva's educational initiatives increased enrollment of school-aged populations from less than 60 percent in 1965 to close to 70 percent by 1969 for ages 5-19 and to 94 percent in 1970 for ages 7-14 years old (Fisher 1979:54). While the Frei administration addressed the question of access to education, some critics note that his educational initiatives failed to challenge the capitalist structures that foment inequality in the education system (see, for example, Fisher 1979). Frei approached education from a corporatist outlook that simply focused on the surface level bureaucratic and technical aspects of education.

Allende's *Escuela Nacional Unificada*

Salvador Allende, socialist Chilean president from 1970 to 1973, recognized education's role in bringing about revolutionary social change not only through a development lens but also through political socialization. Allende's educational project, *Escuela Nacional Unificada* (National Unified School-ENU), sought to create a unified and participatory national education

system imbued with socialist humanist principles and educational democratization (Fisher 1979; Vera-Yanez 2012). Throughout the decision-making process, the ENU, founded on value of democratization, called for full participation from the community in addition to educational leaders and policy makers (Fisher 1979). At its core, the ENU challenged the traditional approach to education reform; first, it acknowledged the inequality within the Chilean education system and second, it worked collectively to address educational needs. The ENU was envisioned to be a national, unified, democratic, productive, integrated with the community, scientific and technological, diversified and planned educational project (Farrell 1986: 146; Fisher 1979: 97). For Allende, education, as a *conscientizador* [vehicle for consciousness-raising], was an instrumental component of the ambitious ideological project that was the ENU. The primary goal of the ENU was the formation of the *el hombre Nuevo* [new man], or the enlightened person, wherein an individual became aware of their position and role in society (Fisher 1979). The “New Man” was the outcome of Allende’s ideological project. In this manner, the New Man referred to the collective responsibility of society and government in shaping the new generation of citizens to have commitment to humanity, solidarity among its compatriots, and to maintain a critical outlook on society (Vera-Yanez 2012). Despite its critics of implementation and political biases, the ENU served as an educational framework for political socialization.

The Pinochet dictatorship and the promotion of an educational market

Following its coup d’état in September 1973, the military regime maintained a stranglehold on education. Contrary to the previous welfare governments’ educational efforts for equal opportunity and equal access, Pinochet used his position to legitimize an educational marketplace that redefined the role of education. Like Allende, Pinochet tried to use the

educational system as a tool for political socialization, but with a dramatically different political philosophy. Unlike Allende's ENU and aspirations of the New Man, Pinochet called for a competitive meritocratic educational system that rejected the political left's goals of social transformation (Corvalán, 2013; Fisher 1979: 126). On a national level, Pinochet called for the purge of academic personnel from all levels of the Chilean education system, a reduction in funding, and the introduction of a politically conservative national curriculum, particularly in the humanities and social studies (Fisher 1979: 129). In an attempt to de-professionalize education, Pinochet expelled the *Instituto Pedagógico*, a higher education institution focused on the preparation of secondary educators, from the prestigious *Universidad de Chile* (Reisco 2007). At the same time, Pinochet assigned military personnel to oversee school districts and university departments with the purpose of limiting political discussion and organization on the part of teachers and students (Fisher 1979). In terms of the promotion of competition and meritocracy, Pinochet's core tenet of *libertad de enseñanza* (freedom of learning and teaching) spearheaded the transition from a public education system to an educational market. *Libertad de enseñanza* prioritized an individual's freedom of choice rather than the state's responsibility to educate the nation's youth (Toro Caceres 2015). In this way, the issue lies between the *libertad de enseñanza* and the "*estado docente* [teaching state]"; despite the structural and ideological changes ushered in by the Frei and Allende administrations, *libertad de enseñanza* is deeply ingrained into Chilean education. (Fisher 1979: 143). Moreover, Pinochet redefined the democratic right to education and the state's role in it by shifting away from working towards equitable education and towards simply expanding access to education (Fisher 1979). Under this logic, *libertad de enseñanza* promoted the school choice movement as well as incentivized the opening and management of new schools by private corporations.

As a byproduct of Pinochet's *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza* (Organic Constitutional Law for Education -LOCE), a piece of educational policy which outlasted the military regime and sustained an educational market under the pillars of *libertad de enseñanza*, *municipalización*, and *financiamiento compartido*, the aforementioned *libertad de enseñanza* cemented neoliberalism's grip on education to ultimately reframe education not as a social responsibility but as an individual object of consumption (Oxhorn 2011). Furthermore, the neoliberal agenda was carried out by Ley LOCE's second pillar, *municipalización* (municipalization) which transferred educational oversight from the Ministry of Education at the national level to the municipality at the local and regional level (Elacqua, Contreras, Felipe Salazar, and Santos 2011). As a result, it led to the decentralization and restructuring of the Chilean Education system. It created a three-tiered system, rooted in Milton Friedman's "education voucher" concept, in which public schools were financed through a federal attendance-based voucher and managed by the municipality. Private-voucher schools were also funded by same attendance-based voucher but were privately run, and private schools were both privately funded and owned (Donoso 2016: 177; Oxhorn 2011). Although the attendance based voucher somewhat touches on the last critical pillar, the newfound educational market grew in number of schools and selectivity through *financiamiento compartido* (shared financing). *Financiamiento compartido* allowed private-voucher schools to charge parents additional fees as a supplement to the cost of school. Between the period of 1981 and 1986, the private-voucher enrollment rate increased from 15 percent to 25 percent, a figure that by 2006 had risen to 43 percent (Elacqua et al 2011: 447). To appease the private-voucher school demand, the number of for-profit voucher schools began to outnumber the nonprofit voucher schools that existed before Pinochet's education reform. Since private-voucher schools received a flat-rate attendance

voucher, for-profit voucher schools were incentivized to select students from high socio-economic backgrounds who could afford the added fees (Mizala and Torche 2012). In 2008, the *Ley de Subvención Preferencial* [law of preferential subsidizing-SEP] attempted to address the socio-economic discrimination brought about by the flat-rate attendance voucher by instituting an additional subsidy of 50% over the base voucher for students from low income backgrounds (Elacqua 2012; Teichman 2011).

Education and the return to democracy: Policies under the *Concertación* governments(1990-2006)

Despite the reforms with the Chilean government following the return of democracy, within the education system the *Concertación* governments have only deepened the neoliberal economic model by maintaining the Pinochet's educational policy, Ley LOCE, until 2006 (Teichman 2011). Fitting to their name which translates to, in accordance, the *Concertación* governments are known for establishing a political center that previously did not exist (Oxhorn, 2011). This new centrist coalition outright rejected the extreme far right wing parties that supported the dictatorship. In efforts to sustain the fragile political stability, these *Concertación* governments designed public policy to address social welfare needs to appease the political left without restructuring the neoliberal system that the right vehemently supported (Teichman 2011). In terms of education, the *Concertación* governments did not address the long term implications of the Ley LOCE and as such, allowed for neoliberalism to further cement itself in the education system. It was not until 2006, through the growing pressure from a student protest denoted the *Revolución de los Pingüinos*, that President Michelle Bachelet began conversations with policy makers, education reformers, and student activists to replace Ley LOCE. In 2009, the *Ley General de Educación* [general law of education] within it the aforementioned Ley SEP,

introduced accountability and addressed funding inequities (Donoso 2016). Nonetheless, the educational market structure remained largely intact. Frustrated by the lack of structural changes, students protested nationwide for free and equitable education in 2011 and pressured legislators to create a second two-pronged education bill. One part of the bill focused on providing quality education through the creation of the Agency on the Quality of Education. Secondly, through the School Inspectorate, the bill monitored schools' compliance with laws and regulations (Donoso 2016). Despite Bachelet's legislative changes, its implementation is still a work in progress and much of the educational structure ushered in by Pinochet's *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza* still stands in place.

The role of teachers and the curriculum in the educational market created by the military dictatorship

Through the neoliberal educational market that Pinochet installed, the purpose of education and its active agents -- educators and the curriculum -- have radically changed. As mentioned earlier, the expulsion of the *Instituto Pedagógico* from *La Universidad de Chile* in addition to the lax regulation of private-voucher schools made it so that the teaching profession is devalued. Although *Ley No. 19.070* requires that all teachers hold degrees in pedagogy and the Ministry of Education has some discretionary oversight over national curricula, much of the administrative power in education has been transferred to the municipalities and private schools owners (Gauri 1998). The push for decentralization has also impacted teachers' ability to have legal outlets to organize to defend their interests as workers and as professional educators. As a result of the dictatorship, there is limited national union representation for teachers. Currently, *Colegio de Profesores*, classified not as a union but a *gremio*, is the one of the few national organizations fighting for teachers' rights. At times mistaken as synonyms, *gremio* locally

organizes on behalf of a specific profession to advocate for its members but is less ideologically driven than unions. Similarly, during the dictatorship, student organizations known as *centros de alumnos* [student centers] were allowed to exist but were forbidden from engaging in political, religious or pedagogical activities; and limited only to social, cultural, and athletic functions (Fisher 1979: 130).

Furthermore, efforts to depoliticize the Chilean education system extend to the national curriculum. The implementation of standardized exams such as the *Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación* [SIMCE, System of Measurement of Quality of Education] given in second, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, and eleventh grade and the *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* [PSU, Exam of University Selection], used as the national college entrance exam, has led to a “teaching to the test” mentality. In attempting to teach an unrealistic number of learning objectives, teachers often resort to traditional, passive, homogenous instructional methods that favor students from middle and upper class families (Schiefelbein and Schiefelbein, 2000). Such exclusionary styles of teaching can be seen in the language used in the classroom. Both the SIMCE and PSU, like many standardized exams, use vocabulary and examples most familiar to students with a middle class upbringing. Furthermore, through a “teaching to the test” mentality, teachers are dissuaded from engaging in student-centered activities, such as project based learning, that draw on real world challenges rather than focusing on memorizing content and mastering discrete skills. The current curriculum and teaching methods emphasize the accumulation of information and marketable skills that produce future workers (Caro and Aguilar, 2018). Moreover, this reductionist and positivist view of education results in decontextualized learning and limits spaces of dialogue and critical thinking.

NEOLIBERALISM AND *CONCIENTIZACIÓN* IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

As the practice of free-market ideology, neoliberalism charges individuals with the responsibility of “optimiz[ing]” their own choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions” by prioritizing the “acquisition of skills, development of entrepreneurial ventures, [and] techniques of self-engineering and capital accumulation” (Ong 2006:6). In this manner, neoliberalism shapes how individuals govern and comport themselves in neoliberal states and among each other. The onset and fortification of neoliberalism in the Chilean education system has affected students and teachers not only in academic terms but also within the social realm. Most of the research on Chile’s education system throughout the military regime and going into the *Concertación* governments has focused on studying the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the educational voucher experiment (Elacqua et al 2011; McEwan 2001). In terms of the impact of the educational market on social relations, extant literature has critically examined the exacerbation of socio-economic stratification and class-based segregation brought about by the three-tiered education system (Donoso 2016; Elacqua 2012; Mizala and Torch 2010; Oxhorn 2011). Limited research has been conducted, however, on the educational market’s effect on social relations.

The scant research available has centered on neoliberalism’s direct effect on democracy and citizenship. Oxhorn (2011) notes that among the greatest obstacles to true citizenship and full democracy in Latin America are widespread economic insecurity and the segmented educational system. Furthermore, the reinstatement of democracy in Chile has been a polemic, poorly instituted, and politically marginalizing process. In a relatively peaceful transition, Chile’s return to democracy was initiated in 1988 by the Command for the No (*Concertación por el No*) that through a divisive plebiscite vote of 54.68 percent to 43 percent was able to upend military

dictator Augusto Pinochet's 17-year rule (Oxhorn 2011:108). The transitional governments that followed (1990- 2006) came to be known as *Concertación* (Concertation) governments and consisted primarily of loosely tied left of center political parties and the center-right Christian Democrats (Oxhorn 2011; Teihman 2011). Considering this politically contentious environment and the limited outlets for political expression, democracy in 21st-century Chile came to be defined by an elitist decision-making style that has undermined participatory democratic involvement and limited structural change (Donoso 2016; Oxhorn 2011). In this way, the *Concertación* governments dealt with pushback from center right and right wing parties that limited the enactment of social welfare policies and introduced an aversion to social movements.

Nevertheless, as shown by the growing number of social movements in Chile, such as historic, nationwide, months-long student mobilization in 2006 and 2011, or more recently the citywide *Educación No Sexista* protests that broke out in Santiago in May 2018, it is evident that many Chilean youth are actively vocal on social justice issues. As such, this study examines the role that schools, the educational system, and teaching play in how students come to develop strong beliefs about matters of social justice and are motivated to act upon those beliefs. I frame this question theoretically by drawing upon the works of critical pedagogists such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Paulo Freire, who conceptualize education as an inherently political act, which contributes to the development of students' critical consciousness.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH: CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

As a broad theoretical foundation, critical theory is a school of thought largely known as “the Frankfurt School” with contributions from influential philosophers such as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse. Critical theory characterizes itself for its efforts to question that which is seen as objective and to expose the social and historical relationships underpinning our

world (Giroux 2003). For Giroux (2003), critical theory calls upon a process of self-conscious critique and continuous critical dialogue as a means of challenging the existing social structures and prevailing ideologies and working toward social transformation. Critical pedagogy goes a step further by grounding critical theory in the field of education. As a philosophy, critical pedagogy emphasizes the dialectical, participatory, and political aspects of education. Through the dialectical understanding of education, schools become both sites of domination and liberation, such that the school is not just a place for students' indoctrination or socialization, but also an opportunity for student empowerment and self-transformation (McLaren 1989). For Freire, student empowerment comes through participatory and critical dialogue that challenges the dominant education discourse and brings to light students' autonomy (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003). Consequently, this emancipatory educational process entails an ongoing process of dialogue leading to reflection and analysis that inspires action. The culmination of these processes is what Freire calls *conscientização*, the development of critical social consciousness. *Conscientização* or conscientization is "the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them" (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003: 15). To best explain this concept, I turn to Patricia King's (2007) work (Figure 1,) which divides this process of conscientization into two phases. The first phase, social awareness, considers all the different factors that contribute to the breaking point or "aha moment," which signals a shift in one's worldview. The second phase emphasizes moving beyond awareness to taking an active role in either challenging or maintaining the status quo.

In examining the power relations underpinning knowledge and knowledge construction, critical pedagogy looks at the dominant curriculum to uncover prevailing hegemony within

education. Under a capitalist economy, the dominant curriculum undertakes an instrumentalist approach to reduce knowledge, and education as an expression of it, to a technical process independent of its power (McLaren, 1989). As a result, it creates a “banking” concept of education, wherein teachers transfer their knowledge to the empty vessels that are their students (Freire, 1994). Hence, both the teacher and the student fail to recognize or realize the potential of the dialectical nature of education wherein students learn from teachers and teachers learn from students (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003). In seeing students as empty vessels, teachers overlook the knowledge that the students carry with them and thus limit students’ participation in the educational process. As students become accustomed to being recipients of knowledge, they lose sight of their ability and autonomy, ultimately assuming a passive role and weakening the development of critical consciousness (Freire 1994).

In practice, *conscientização* or critical consciousness comes to life by moving away from the banking concept of education and toward problem-posing education. Problem-posing education situates the dialogical act of teaching and learning in reality and participants’ real world experiences. By its dialectic nature, problem-posing education elicits a “consciousness of,” as students become critical co-investigators with their teachers, constantly analyzing the material and content being taught and authentically reflecting on its implications for their own lives (Freire 1994). In this way, critical consciousness is the culmination of students’ critical reflection on the diverse experiences they are being exposed to within and outside the classroom.

After witnessing the fervent, passionate spirit present in the more than 30,000 people who marched on the *Alameda* (downtown Santiago’s main thoroughfare) for equitable education in April 2018 to the thought-provoking, critical conversations I had with high school students, I find critical pedagogy to be the most fitting theoretical framework for making sense of my

observations. Although I did consider using feminist and socio-cultural theory, I ultimately decided on critical pedagogy because of its emphasis on the dual role of education as both a mechanism of social control and tool of empowerment. Moreover, critical pedagogy recognizes the quality of education and the role it plays in shaping students worldview. During my time in Chile and through extensive research on the Chilean education system, I sensed the coexistence of liberator and repressive education and how it all contributed to students' development of critical consciousness. As such, critical pedagogy best aligned with the goals of this study: to further understand the role of education in students' developing a critical consciousness.

METHODS

The purpose of this project is to explore the role that education has on developing critical consciousness in Chilean youth. In an effort to capture a broader image of education in Chile, this study did not focus on solely one school but rather selected a series of schools renowned for their high levels of involvement in social movements. Additionally, this study employed a mix of qualitative methods, consisting of participant observation of history classes in three of the interviewed student's high schools and semi-structured formal interviews with both students and history teachers. The primary reason for selecting history as the subject of observation is its explicit and direct implications on developing critical consciousness. History class is more than a recounting of past events but holds the potential to contextualize students' current lived experiences in larger socio-historical framework. Although the majority of the interviews and classroom observations were conducted between the months of May and June 2018, preparation for this study started two months earlier. By living with multiple Chilean host families, attending lectures in Spanish with local college students, and making numerous site visits to different types

of schools, I was able to culturally immerse myself, contextualize current events, and create connections with future interviewees.

Since this research was conducted as the final part of my study abroad program, SIT Chile: Comparative Education and Social Change, the months leading to the Independent Study Project (ISP) served as preparation for the month-long research endeavor. In the two months prior to the ISP, I participated in a group of 15 other U.S. students in discussions of educational issues affecting the Chilean education system visits to public, private-voucher, and private schools in Santiago, Valparaiso and Temuco. The in-class discussions regarding both the educational issues we studied along with current events and mobilizations we witnessed were critical to shaping this study's research questions. The school visits helped to ground these newfound inquiries in the real lived experiences of the students and teachers we met. Although most of the visits were brief, many of the students were open to sharing their stories and held strong beliefs about their education system. My closeness in age with many of the high school students, sometimes being only three years apart from them, fostered that sense of easy rapport. The nature of school visits made it so that we, both the Chilean students and U.S. students, could have frank discussions about each other's education systems. In this manner, there was an imbedded level of reciprocity and trust where both parties learned from each other. These sentiments carried through in the future interactions, when Chilean students either offered to be interviewed or helped connect me to potential interviewees. Four out of the nine student interviews were with students I initially met and connected with during the school visits. Throughout the course of the program, I was able to maintain contact with many of the students through popular social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram. Maintaining such connections proved helpful when seeking participants; three out of the nine student

interviews came about through this method of sampling. Furthermore, through snowball sampling, I was able to get in contact with students at high schools that we did not visit or with which SIT program had limited contact.

Qualitative interviews of high school students and teachers

A total of twelve interviews, nine with students and three with history teachers, were conducted and are represented in this thesis. As preparation for the ISP, my program required a mini ISP as the first phase of the ISP. The mini ISP consisted of a four days of four-hour-long visits between April 2 and April 6 to a public, historic all girls high school in the *comuna* [municipality] of Santiago. Through this brief, yet in depth visit, I gained a sense of the demographics, conditions, and content taught in a Chilean public school classroom. The remainder of the observations took place in the month of May, one in a historic, coed public high school in the *comuna* of Santiago and the other in a historic, coed technical high school in Valparaiso. Technical high schools most resemble vocational schools in the US that provide students with technical training suited for entering the workforce after graduation. The sites of observations were in one part chosen because of the SIT faculty and staffs' connection and relationship with the schools, but most importantly, they were selected for the history and institutional culture of the schools. Given time limitations for my ISP, an ethnographic approach in which the researcher fully becomes immersed in the research site was not possible. However, the observation of history classes coupled with fifteen minute to hour-long interviews permitted a depth typical of an ethnographic study. The nine students interviewed were from six different schools: two schools were all-girl public schools, two were all-boy public schools and two schools were coed. The students interviewed were either in their first or in last year of high

school. Of these students, two were studying in a technical high school and the other seven attended traditional high schools.

Ethics

When conducting research within the schools or interviewing minors, there is a necessary level of sensitivity with regard to how one presents the research topic and how one conducts said research. Prior to entering the schools and conducting formal interviews, I confirmed approval of the human subject review process from the School for International Training's Local Review Board consisting of my Academic Director and two additional local faculty or professionals with expertise in the subject matter. In working in the school setting, the researcher must be respectful of class time and students' comfort and understanding of the research and research questions. To ensure that these needs were addressed, I assured interviewees complete anonymity and reminded interviewees that they were not obligated to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. Furthermore, doing research in a foreign country carries an added layer of cultural and ethical sensitivity that the researcher must bear in mind throughout the course of the research project. As a researcher, my responsibility first and foremost is to the people whose lives and cultures I am studying. Throughout the data collection process, I made sure that the needs of these people, including protecting their dignity and privacy, took precedence over other considerations, even the success of the research project itself. In all dealings with the SIT Chile: Comparative Education and Social Change program, my host institution, and the respective institutions that contributed to the project, I ensured that they not compromise their responsibilities or ethics for the sake of the research project.

I maintained transparent and candid intentions of my research interest and goals. I introduced myself as a student researcher wanting to learn from the Chilean education system

and its passionate students in order to carry those lessons with me as a future educator and researcher in the United States. An initial report of the research findings was written in Spanish as part of SIT's ISP requirements. A copy of this report was shared with my ISP advisor, the SIT Chile program and SIT's digital ISP collection. In that initial report and throughout this thesis, I use pseudonyms for all of the interviewees to ensure anonymity. Consequentially, the names of the schools and specifics of the institution have also been altered to maintain anonymity but all information was retrieved from *Ministerio de Educación de Chile* [Chilean ministry of education]. On a personal level, I constantly reflected on my implicit biases as a U.S. born Latina, an aspiring educator, and an U.S. undergraduate researcher. I approached conversations with both students and teachers attempting to minimize my own presuppositions and emphasize my genuine curiosity and appreciation of the participants' own experiences and knowledge of topic. Furthermore, another limitation in this study concerns the language and cultural barriers I faced. Though I am a native Spanish speaker, I grew up in the United States surrounded by Mexican and Central American culture and as such, my Spanish-speaking abilities and cultural references revolve around those cultures. I have attempted to deal with some of the translation challenges in this thesis by first presenting the interviewee's own words in Spanish, followed by my English translation of what I understood them to be saying.

PROFILES OF THE SCHOOLS AND THE STUDENTS

Because of Ley LOCE and its successor, the Ley General de Educacion, there has been an expansion of private-voucher schools in the last two decades. In 2005, private-voucher schools accounted for 45 percent of student enrollment (Reisco 2007: 80). By 2015, state subsidized private voucher schools captured 48 percent of student enrollment and public municipal schools only accounted for 37 percent of student enrollment (Donoso 2016: 179).

Furthermore, with 42 percent of the students attending public municipal schools being from the lower classes, there is clear evidence for class-based stratification of the Chilean education system. In search of more mixed-income, diverse schools, I looked to schools located in the *comuna* of Santiago where different realities seem to converge. By this, I mean that students of different socio-economic backgrounds converge in this socio-economically mixed *comuna*. Additionally, I sought out schools with a historical legacy of leading or being heavily involved in social movements. In choosing the schools and students in this study, I do not claim to be representing the Chilean education system as whole, but rather to shed light on the experiences of an atypical set of schools. In the following section, to contextualize the research sites, I will delve deeper into the history, institutional culture and student population at each these schools. Moreover, I will provide insight into the personal story of the students in the study mentioning their previous educational background, their current educational track, and future aspirations. There is variation in the length of participants' profile because certain participants felt more comfortable divulging on their personal stories than others did.

The Chilean secondary education system is divided into two tracks: *científico-humanista* and *técnico profesional*. The *científico-humanista* track is designed to prepare students for higher education. Furthermore, this college preparatory curriculum subdivides student in their third year of high school into the humanities or sciences track to receive instruction that is more specialized. Five out of the six schools in this study fall under this category. On the other hand, the *técnico profesional* track is geared to train students to enter the workforce. In their first two years of high school, students at a *liceo técnico profesional* take a common curriculum that meets the national secondary education standards. Similar to the *científico-humanista* track, in their last

two years of high schools students specialize in a certain area with the goal of graduating with a technical certificate in their area of study.

As previously mentioned, the schools in the study were chosen because of their status as historical or emblematic. *Liceos emblemáticos*, as locals commonly refer to them, are public schools with distinguished records of academic excellence, tradition, and prestige, which are among the highest performing municipal schools in the country. Though these schools are public, because of their elevated status they are allowed to select student students based on merit. As a result, these schools tend to draw students from various backgrounds including higher, middle, and lower income students. Three out of the six schools classify as *liceos emblemáticos*: Colegio Manuel Montt, Academy of Applied Learning, and Women's Institute of Santiago. Again, all of the schools along with the students have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. I have categorized the remaining three schools as *liceos históricos* because of their impressive historical trajectory and involvement in Chile's social movements. It is important to note that two of these now *liceos históricos*, MC preparatory and Liceo Municipal Violeta Parra, were once *liceos emblemáticos*. However, these schools have been demoted in the eyes of public because of their subpar performance on SIMCE and PSU leading to decline in their student population.

Colegio Manuel Montt

Colegio Manuel Montt, established in 1813, is one of Chile's oldest and most prestigious schools. Since its founding, the school has been exclusively for boys, although there have been efforts within the school to make open to all genders. Located in the center of Santiago, Colegio Manuel Montt currently has 4,280 students with about 42 students per classroom from 7th grade

to 12th grade. As an emblematic high school, Colegio Manuel Montt has been at the forefront of Chile's largest student movements such *La Revolución de los Pingüinos* in 2006.

Interviewees from this school

- Santiago is a senior on the humanities track at Colegio Manuel Montt. He is motivated by a love for his community to study law at the University of Chile and has considered running for office in the future. He is from the comuna of *Independencia*, which Santiago perceives to be a lower class neighborhood. Prior to Colegio Manuel Montt, he attended two Catholic schools, one private and one private-voucher school, and another municipal school, MC Preparatory, which is another research site of this study, for his early middle school years. He lives with his mother and two younger siblings.
- Miguel is also a senior on the humanities pathway, with aspirations of studying literature. Although he entered Colegio Manuel Montt with the goal of becoming a doctor, after uncovering the transformational cultural potential literature holds, he now plans to be a writer. He is from the comuna of Huechuraba, which Miguel describes as a socio-economically diverse neighborhood. His father and mother both hold technical certificates. His father works as an industrial mechanic and his mother is a homemaker. Before attending Colegio Manuel Montt, he attended a private-voucher school.

The Applied Learning Academy

The Applied Learning Academy is also an all-boys school for students in grades 7 through 12. Established in 1892, the Applied Learning Academy has been renowned for its academic rigor and its leading role in the *tomas* (takeovers) that took place in the 2011 student movements. The Applied Learning Academy has a smaller student population of 1,998 students leaving about 31 students per classroom. However, the school plays much broader role in the

community than simply serving the adolescent populations. In the evenings, it has an adjunct school that offers elementary and secondary education for adults.

Interviewees from this school

- Simón is a senior on the humanities track and plans to be a history teacher because he recognizes the role that education plays in creating social change. He is from the comuna of Maipu.

The Women’s Institute of Santiago

The Women’s Institute of Santiago was founded in 1895 as one of the earliest public educational opportunities for women. Currently, the school has 2,958 students, creating a classroom size of 40 students per classroom that range from seventh to twelfth grade. The Women’s Institute of Santiago, as the counterpart to *Colegio Manuel Montt*, is one of the most prestigious schools in Chile as is exclusively for girls. Its notable alumni include influential politicians and renowned authors. Its fervent social justice orientation came through during my stay in Chile. Throughout ISP observations, students from Women’s Institute of Santiago took over the *Colegio Manuel Montt* over sexual assault allegations on the part of a *Colegio Manuel Montt* male student being accused of sexually assaulting a female custodian. Additionally, Colegio Manuel Montt was also targeted for its sexist rhetoric because of a class sweatshirt embroidered with the denigrating, sexist phrase: “Quien fuera bisectriz para partirte en dos y altura para pasar por tu ortocentro”/ I wish I could be a bisector so that I could cut you [alluding to cartoon of man eyeing a woman] in two and height so that I could pass through your center.” As result of these revelations and other disturbing national news such as the case of baby Ámbar who was raped by her stepfather, the Women’s Institute of Santiago joined in the social

movement of *Ni Una Menos* and *Fin a la educación sexista* by partaking in nationwide school strike essentially shutting down their school for days.

Interviewees from this school

- Raquel is a junior on the science track focusing on biology to work in public health either as a doctor or nurse. She is from the comuna of Maipu and lives with her mother.

Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz

Located in the center of Santiago, with the national public library on one side and cultural center on the other, *Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz* is situated within a cultural nexus.

Established in the 1896, *Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz* as all girl public high school from its inception has been recognized for its progressive feminist character. *Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz* was one of the first schools in Chile that provided women with access to the same national curriculum that was used in traditionally boy's only public schools. Currently the school has a student population of 674 students but it has the capacity of up to 2,300 students, a sum the school held until 1999. The low matriculation rate has resulted in lowered funding for the school. The lack of funding is evidenced in the maintenance of the school building with many of the classrooms lacking central heating or air conditioning, the walls having chipped paint, and the desks are ragged.

Interviewees from this school

- Vanessa is a ninth grader from Cerro Navia, which is a low-income working class neighborhood in the city of Santiago. She attended a private school prior to attending *Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz*. Her mom is works as social worker and her father drives for Uber as a source of income.

- Renata is a ninth grader also from Cerro Navia who came from the same middle school as Vanessa. Her mother also is social worker and her father is a soldier. From our brief interactions, her fiery personality come through in her comments. In sharing with me her interests, she mentioned that she loves to read but quickly adds that only the readings that she chooses, not the ones that authority figures require.
- Sebastian has been a ninth and eleventh grade social studies teacher for the past ten years. He was drawn to teaching by circumstances of life, both in the academic and social sense. He always wanted to be an elementary teacher, but ultimately chose social studies at the secondary level because of its social and moral role in the formation of adolescents' identity.

MC Preparatory

In a similar position, MC Preparatory, which was established in 1933, has suffered from a lowered student matriculation and decrease in funding as a result of it. As of 2012, the school had a student population of about 845. However, currently the school has 452 students with about 23 students per classroom at the secondary level. Similar to *Colegio Manuel Montt*, the MC Preparatory serves student from seventh through twelfth grade but is open to all genders. The school is located on one of Santiago's main thoroughfares, in a newly acquired building that they moved to in 2008. Despite the relatively recent acquisition of the school's building, the inside of the school shows otherwise. In a much smaller space than *Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz*, the MC Preparatory building has signs of wear, with broken desks and graffiti on the walls.

Interviewees from this school

- Nacho is junior on the humanities pathway from the neighborhood of Maipu. He shared that he is supposed to be in his senior year but that he had to repeat a grade because of an excessive number of absences. He admits that he lost a year of his academic life because of teenage rebellion, but he does not regret the lesson he learned. He has aspiration of going to college abroad and studying law.
- Beto, an eleventh grade history teacher at MC Preparatory, has been teaching history for the past eight years. Originally, he studied history as an undergraduate with the hopes of studying sociology in graduate school. However, he chose education because it more closely aligned with his personal and professional goals of bringing about social change. Coming from a family background where, apart from his parents, his larger family has no higher education, he recognizes the potential education has for social mobility.

Liceo Técnico Regional

Although now *Liceo Técnico Regional* is a co-ed school, when it opened in 1897, the school was intended to offer free technical education to women. Nevertheless, from its inception, the school adapted its curriculum and services to the needs of the community. The sentiment of serving the community has carried through and was one of the driving forces in changing to a co-ed environment. It holds a student population 1,161 student with 25 students per classroom. The school offers a *técnico-profesional* education at the secondary level for adolescents. At the same time, the school also provides basic and secondary *científico-humanista* curriculum for adults in the evenings.

Interviewees from this school

- Javiera is a nineteen year old studying to be a nursery school teacher with the aspiration of going to college for an education degree. She is president of the *Centro Estudiantil* (student council).
- Amanda is also a senior on the *parvularia* (early childhood education) track who plans to be an elementary teacher. She is currently vice president of the *Centro Estudiantil*.
- Jorgelina is a passionate young teacher with an impressive academic background, holding a Masters in Gender and Culture from the Universidad de Chile. Although she had a wealthy and conservative upbringing, her conditions quickly changed after learning of the country's social and economic inequities as well as disclosing her sexuality identity as a lesbian to her family. At the age of 21, she was forced out of her home and into the precarious comuna of Valparaiso, Chile's major port city on the Pacific, about 100 kilometers west of Santiago. Drawing on her two diametrically opposing realities, she was drawn to teaching because she knew firsthand the power education had to foster social change.

THEMES THAT EMERGE IN TESTIMONIES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

In this section, I will go over themes that emerged from the interviews with participants. Although I am not making explicit use of the three classroom observations in this section, the classroom observations were critical in situating me in a context where I could see both the teachers' and students' perspectives at work. My findings reveal the emergence of critical consciousness as explained by two-phase process described by King (2007). In accordance with the first phase of social awareness, many participants held an understanding of the challenges and issues affecting the education system at both the macro and micro level. Under the subsection "surreptitious neoliberalism in the Chilean education system," students reveal their

awareness of macro factors and in the “spaces of resistance” subsection I delve into the micro determinants. The subsection titled “Emancipatory education and the development of critical consciousness” speaks to the impact that practicing a dialectical, participatory and self-empowering education can have on developing critical consciousness. In the spirit of critical pedagogy, participants claimed ownership over their education and assumed an active role in the process.

Surreptitious neoliberalism in the Chilean education system

From the teachers to the students, all interviewees held some sense of awareness of the fractured state of their neoliberal education system (See Figure 2). In speaking more about the causes of fractured state, eight out twelve students and teachers underscored the rampant individualism, senseless competition, and positivist educational objectives as primary contributors to this stratification. Simon, a high school senior at the Applied Learning Academy with aspirations of being a history teacher, recalls much of his early education consisting of passive, positivist approach to teaching in general but even more so within the humanities. He stated that “*Siempre a la historia se le ve de manera muy positiva y no se habla de proceso o de causales. Simplemente es una larga efeméride.*” [History is always approached in a very positivist manner and no one speaks about the process or the causes. It is simply told as a long series of ephemeral events.]

Through this statement, Simón sheds light on positivist tendencies of the Chilean education system with the teaching of history as a series of “objective facts” with no relationship to each other or to the students themselves (Giroux 1997). From her perspective as a young passionate history teacher at *Liceo Técnico Regional*, Jorgelina notes the difficulty in not succumbing to the positivist culture of teaching, given the manner in which the national

curriculum is structured. She finds that *“el problema es que muchos de los liceos se preocupan en los contenidos... En esa forma, el programa de historia está hecho para que no generes habilidades, ahí está po. ¡Es agobiante, po!”* [The problem is that most schools are preoccupied with the content... In that manner, the history curriculum is not designed to build students’ capabilities. There you have it! It’s exhausting!] By this, Jorgelina reaffirms Simón’s observation that the main emphasis in Chilean history courses lies in the acquisition of information rather than development of students’ potential to engage in critical reflection and participate in collective action guided by their critical consciousness. Earlier in the conversation, Jorgelina explained that the history curriculum in the first two years of high school covers the 19th and 20th century historical timespan, which can be an overwhelming amount of material to cover for any teacher. An important problematic result of this can be not reviewing recent history that delves into the dictatorship and *Concertación* governments. Jorgelina, with the collaboration of history teachers in other grades, has attempted to overcome these challenges by splitting the material between grades. Thus, the ninth grade history teachers cover the first half of the material and the tenth grade history teachers go over the second half. She notes that *“si tú te concentras en habilidades, pues entonces selecciones contenidos.”* [if you focus on building student capacities, then you have to leave out some of the content.] Beto, a high school history teacher at MC preparatory, also says that he teaches *“cosas que tiene que ver con lo de las habilidades ... Es mucho más útil para ellos que simplemente tener contenidos para el futuro.”* [things that have to do with building capacities ... It is much more useful for them than simply having content for the future.] In this manner, Jorgelina and Beto express the challenges the Chilean history curriculum poses for teachers who lack the experience, knowledge or will to teach history

fully, as well as the ability to overcome these challenges by centering lessons around building students' abilities rather than transmitting content.

Many of the students and teachers alike cited standardized exams such as SIMCE and PSU as instigators of competition among the students and prescribing narrow standards of education. As Miguel, a senior at the *Colegio Manuel Montt*, points out “*la misma medida del ranking [hablando del SIMCE y del PSU] fomenta la competencia y a causa de eso el individualismo.*” [the very measurement of ranking [speaking about SIMCE and PSU] foments competition and, as a result of that, individualism.] Simón echoes these thoughts by stating that “*hay varias cosas que se tienen que corregir... Gran parte de la valorización que se le da al colegio es precisamente por las pruebas estandarizadas.* [there are many things you have to fix... A great part of the rating a school receives is precisely because of the standardized exams.] Here, both students single out standardized exams and the high stakes associated with them as problem in their education. Much of the value of standardized exams stem from their alignment with global economy and the country's socio-political goals (McLaren, 1989). In this way, standardized exams have intentionally narrow standards because their goal is not to maximize full potential but rather only those skills that the economy sees as profitable. Nacho, a junior at MC Preparatory, deepens this observation by highlighting the effect these standardized exams have on the quality of education a student receives. He states that “*te categorizan por estándares super cerrados...les dicen [a los docentes y estudiantes] que se enfoquen en su materia* [they categorize you by narrow standards... They tell [teachers and students] to focus on their subject content.] Beto agrees with Nacho, finding that they dictate what information he covers in the classroom. Beto notes that:“*las pruebas impactan la forma en que enseno clase en el largo plazo. Las pruebas tienen el objetivo de segmentar, si fuese solo para diagnosticar serían*

positivas.” [standardized exams impact the manner in which I reach my classes in the long term. Standardized exams have the objective of stratifying, if it were only to diagnose they would then be positive.] Thus, students and teachers acknowledge the level of influence standardized exams have on their education, both in limiting the academic material they learn and their social relationships among their peers.

Further focusing on the social effects, many students underscore the individualism that arises from being within a neoliberal education system. Simón strongly asserts that “*el sistema educativo chileno fomenta el individualismo lo cual yo critico mucho. La educación debería de fomentar un rol colectivo de uno contribuir a la sociedad; no de que uno salga por sí solo sino de que todos florezcan juntos.*” [the Chilean education system foments individualism, which I am highly critical of. Education should encourage a collective role, wherein one contributes to society, not where only one person triumphs but where everyone flourishes together.] For Simón, the prevailing individualist mentality in Chile is a direct result of the fragmented education system. Similarly, Santiago, a senior at *Colegio Manuel Montt*, recalls his mindset prior to entering high school as being driven by an individualist capitalist mentality. Santiago shared that his “*única meta era terminar el colegio e ir a la uni y ganar plata. En el colegio fui pensando por qué estoy pensando solo en mí mismo y con una mentalidad individualista. Ya no quiero salir a trabajar para tener plata, ahora quiero salir a trabajar para ayudar a las personas y contribuir a la sociedad.*” [my only goal was to finish high school, go to college, and make money. In *Colegio Manuel Montt*, I began to question why I was only thinking about myself through this individualistic mentality. Now I do not want to go work only to make money, instead I want to work to help people and contribute to society.] These statements shed light on the impact that neoliberalism within the education system has on how students see their future

selves and their relationship to society. Many students are critical of the dominant individualist capitalist mentality and how it weakens collective bonds.

Spaces of resistance

Although students are cognizant of the flaws in their education system, they also recognize that there exist spaces within the education system that challenge the status quo. Among these spaces of resistances, student and teachers mentioned their respective schools as atypical because, unlike other schools, they sites of generating social change. All students agreed that their current high school was the primary catalyst of their own internal change toward social issues that created interest, shaped their perspective, and widened their worldview.

Students contrasted their experiences in their current high school with their previous schools, and how those schools approached social justice issues. Javiera, a senior at Liceo Técnico Regional, finds that “*a diferencia de otros liceos, este liceo con el centro de estudiantes apoya*” [in contrast to to other schools, this school supports its student union]. Raquel, a senior at the Women’s Institute of Santiago agrees, pointing out that

la educación es muy diferente la que me dan acá con mi anterior colegio el liceo [particular subvencionado] solo tenía enfoque en esto [lo académico] y como en ese tiempo el colegio era nuevo no teníamos un centro de alumnos. Ahora al llegar a un centro de alumnos donde [todas tienen] que votar, y los profesores nos dicen chiquillas saben que pasó esto... Cosas así me hicieron darme cuenta del mundo en el que estaba. [the education that I receive here compared to my old school [a private-voucher school] only focused on this [the academic] and since at that time the high school was new, we did not have a student union. Now arriving to a student union where [we all] voted and the professors would tell us

about something that had happened ... this helped me become aware of the world in which I live.]

Here, Javiera and Raquel distinguish their school as different than other schools, particularly because of the level of institutional support for students' organization.

Six out of twelve interviewees highlighted the importance of their school's history and institutional culture. Simón points out that Applied Learning Academy's "*tradición educacional académica y también una historia social bastante fuerte [que contribuye al] carácter del liceo e su idiosincrasia que lo hace ser un liceo bastante comprometido con la lucha social.*"

[educational tradition and social history is very fervent [that contributes to] the school's character and orientation as as strongly committed to social justice.] Santiago believes that, "*en los liceos emblemáticos ... existe más gente consciente, o la hay en otros liceos pero están aislados y no tienen un grupo de apoyo*" [in emblematic high schools there are more socially aware people or they exist in other schools but they are isolated and do not have the necessary support.] Santiago and Simón stand by Javiera and Raquel's observation about institutional support but take this observation one step further noting that it is in the institutional culture of liceos emblemáticos and históricos to foster social awareness. On the teachers' perspective, Jorgelina echoes these student's observations stating that "*como liceo, está dentro de nuestro proyecto de liceo ser un agente transformador.*" [as a school, it is within our school project to be a transformative agent.

Furthermore, five out of twelve participants mentioned that their school's location in the center of Santiago and/or the socioeconomic diversity of its student population opened their eyes to alternative realities. Simón notes that in his school

convergen muchachos de muchas realidades. Convergen muchachos de la zona norte y de la zona sur. Muchos que viven en población y otros que tienen poder adquisitivo. A partir de eso, uno va aprendiendo diferentes realidades. No se crea es burbuja, que se le caracteriza mucho a la educación chilena, que muchos colegios tienen una burbuja que se segmenta en ella misma. Solamente por la ubicación geográfica... en este núcleo convergen muchos. [people of many backgrounds congregate, boys from the north side and the south side. Many who live in slums and others who are quite affluent. Because of that, one starts learning about different realities. There is not a bubble, which is characteristic of Chilean education, where many schools live in this bubble that segregates itself. Simply due to its geographic location... in this nexus many realities converge.]

In this way, liceos emblemático and históricos as public schools in the *comuna* of Santiago, one of the more economically mixed neighborhoods, are designed to bring together students of diverse backgrounds. Raquel appreciates the socio-economic diversity in her school because it gives her “*una perspectiva más grande de lo que aquí está pasando. Tengo una perspectiva más grande de Santiago.*” [a bigger perspective of what is happening here, I have a broader view of Santiago.] Along the same lines, for many students having their school be in the center of Santiago not only exposed them to an array of social movements (See Figure 5) and issues but it also facilitated their involvement in them, given their proximity to the main boulevard Av. Libertador Bernardo O’Higgins [also known as La Alameda], where most marches take place.

Within the classroom, Jorgelina discussed bursting the bubble by holding difficult conversations around class and class-consciousness. She states that “*alguien se tiene que atrever a hablar de pobreza ... en Chile. La dictadura lo hizo muy bien porque al final eliminó la*

conciencia de clase, naturalizó la violencia y exclusión.” [someone has to dare to talk about poverty... in Chile the dictatorship did a good job because it eliminated class consciousness, it normalized violence and exclusion.] All three teachers saw their classroom as a liberating space for critical, participatory dialogue wherein student’s real life experiences were used as valuable content for learning (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003). Sebastián, a history teacher at Liceo Municipal Manuela Sáenz, spoke about how him taking “*40 minutos de la clase de historia para trabajar el tema de la toma, eso no es una pérdida de clase, inclusive es parte de lo que se está viendo hoy día pero le integro un contenido de mi clase histórico.*” [40 minutes from history class to talk about the topic of the *toma* (school take over), it is not a waste of time, on the contrary it is part of what they are experiencing day to day so I make an effort to integrate it into my classes.] Sebastian purposefully made time in during his lessons to cover topics such as *toma*, a tactic of struggle common in student movements, which students are constantly being exposed to through own experience or that of their peers. Teachers not only made time for these important discussions in the classroom but they also designed lessons in such a way that the material connected with the students. Beto disclosed that “*esta asignatura podría estar pensándola en el momento que ellos van a trabajar en el futuro, pero trato de ponerla en situaciones reales para que ellos viviesen y comprendan qué significa.*” [could think about this assignment in terms of its implications on their jobs in the future, but instead I try to position my lessons in real life situations so that they can experience and understand what it means.] All nine students interviewed talked about how influential having this time for discussion and manner of teaching was, not only in how they made sense of the world around them but also in how they saw education.

Emancipatory education and the development of critical consciousness

In the spirit of critical pedagogy, participants' perception of education mirrored that of Freire and alluded to an emerging critical social conscience. An essential component and product of *conscientização* or conscientization is empowering students through education to be critical agents with a fervent commitment to social justice (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres 2003).

The first step in this process of *conscientização* is students' conceptualization of education as more than knowledge acquisition but, rather, a tool of transformation. Five out of the nine students interviewed spoke about a sense of ownership over their education which evoked feelings of empowerment. Javiera proclaimed her ownership of education by reaffirming the societal right to education, she declares "*un punto importante es la educación, porque es para todos* [an important point is education because it is for everyone.] In talking about reclaiming one's education, Simón believes education should "*extraer lo mejor de la gente.... Es potenciar mucho las habilidades que la gente tenga para que puedan enfrentar su realidad y convivir en su realidad de la mejor manera posible*" [bring out the best in people ... It is about maximizing people's capacities so that they can confront their reality and live it out to the best of their ability.] Javiera and Simón in their statements reveal an awareness of the potential transformative power of education as well a social right to it. Jorgelina, the history teacher at Liceo Técnico Regional shares how she goes about practicing emancipatory education in her classroom. She recalls "*tengo estudiantes que me dicen 'usted me cambió'. Yo les digo, 'Guachito, yo no hice nada.' Yo solamente te dije creo en ti, eres bueno...Tiene que ver con el respeto, con amor, con cariño, ¿cachay?'*" [I have students that say to me "you changed me.' I tell them, 'I did nothing. I just said I believe in you, you are good' ... It has to do with respect, with love, and kindness.] For Jorgelina, teaching should be done with "*el afecto como el motor*

de la educación...Dentro de nuestro proyecto educacional está crear buenas personas que se integran a la sociedad, no como agentes útiles, porque gentes útiles hay muchas. Queremos buenas personas que transforman.”[love as the driving force ... Inside of our educational project is creating good people that integrate themselves into society, not as useful agents, because useful people we have a lot of. We want people that transform things] In this way, Jorgelina agrees with the students’ views of education and believes that love and respect are the foundation of emancipatory education.

A second indicator of the development of a critical conscience was the manner in which students spoke about their involvement in social movements as one based on solidarity (See Figure 4) . Four of nine students framed their interest and involvement in social justice work as social responsibility to past and future generations. Renata, a first year at Liceo Municipal Manuela Saenz, discloses that she *“incentivada a seguir intentando cambiarlo y no dejarlo ahí porque sé que ahora no me afecta a mí, eso pero que a mi papa le afecta”* [she is motivated to change things and not leave things how they are because although it does not affect her, it impacts her dad] In a similar manner, Vanessa finds that she is involved because, she says, *“no quiero que sufran [primas y hermanas menores] las mismas cosas que estamos sufriendo hoy los jóvenes. No sé, quiero en un futuro cambiar lo que está pasando”* [I do not want them [younger siblings and cousins] to suffer the same things that today’s youth is suffering. I do not know, I want to in a future change what is happening right now.] In this regard, students’ current actions from discussing social justice issues to actively participating in marches and protests are motivated by deep commitment to others.

The crux of students’ critical conscience was exemplified in their social awareness and criticalness. Seven out of nine students demonstrated high levels of reflexivity wherein they

maintained a critical outlook on their schools, society, and even themselves. Raquel, in talking about her school culture, notes that *“hay mucha competencia, pero en la reflexión, hablamos de la importancia de ayudarnos mutuamente”* [there is a lot of competition, but in reflecting, we talk about the importance of mutually helping each other.] In terms of society, Nacho states *“cuando una persona es realmente ignorante, la sociedad muere... Siento que la sociedad chilena está muerta porque no saben lo que realmente pasa”* [when a person is truly ignorant, society dies... I feel that Chilean society is dead because they are not aware.] Here, Nacho reveals that the general population is not informed about social issues and finds that to be the demise of Chilean society. Just as students criticize Chilean society, they are also critical of themselves. Simon strongly asserts that *“si somos críticos hacia la realidad, hay que ser críticos hacia nuestras propias acciones”* [if we are going to be critical toward society, we have to be critical toward our own actions.] Together, these values of solidarity, reflexivity and empowerment coalesce into an emerging critical conscience.

DISCUSSION

The primary focus of this study was not to prove the presence of critical consciousness among Chilean youth but rather to explore its emergence in relation to education and in a select population of Chilean youth. The select group consisted of high school students attending schools renowned for their high levels of involvement in and discussion of matters of social justice. In this exploratory study, I investigated the role education plays in developing critical consciousness among Chilean youth. To do so, I use critical pedagogy as the framework to analyze the research findings. Rooted in critical theory, critical pedagogy, through the lens of education, seeks to go beyond simply understanding society and moves toward critiquing and ultimately changing it. By employing a critical pedagogy outlook that acknowledges the dual

nature of education as both coercive and emancipatory, I was able to better capture the impact education has on consciousness raising or conscientization among adolescents. As supported by the findings, students demonstrated the development of a critical consciousness through means of their education. As outlined by critical pedagogy, Freire's critical consciousness consist of first holding deep awareness for a broad span of social realities that extend beyond one's experience and secondly becoming active agents in shaping reality.

With regard to social awareness, students expressed deepening levels of cognizance from the macro to the micro. At the macro level, students revealed a visceral understanding of the impact neoliberalism has on their education. Many students and teachers touched upon the fragmentation within the educational landscape. Prior research has documented the class-based segregation brought about the three-tiered education system consisting of private schools, private-voucher schools, and public schools (Donoso 2016; Elacqua 2012; Mizala & Torch 2010; Oxhorn 2011). Students reaffirmed scholars' findings regarding class-based stratification within the Chilean education system by contrasting their experiences at their previous institution, which tended to be more socio-economically homogenous compared to their current high schools, which were at that time more socio-economically mixed, Simón, a senior at Applied Learning Academy, finds that these socio-economically segregated environments create a "*burbuja*," or bubble within the schools that become a normalized aspect of the Chilean education system. Through their description, students revealed an understanding of the general Chilean educational landscape. This surface-level understanding is further deepened by their own contrastingly different lived experiences at their current high schools. *Liceos emblemáticos* and *liceos históricos*, by the very nature of their socio-economically diverse student populations and long historical trajectory, called upon students to expand their worldview and consider varying social

realities. Together these factors coalesced to provoke an “aha moment” that first raised students awareness on this issues and transitioned them into more active involvement on these matters of social justices (King, 2007).

Furthermore, students and teachers were outspokenly critical of the dominant curriculum especially the overemphasis on standardized exams. Participants recognized the limitations of this type of curriculum, not only in the narrow standards of assessment but also in the content that it transmitted. In this way, they spoke of Freire’s (2003) “banking” concept of education, in which the learning objectives are directly tied to the economy. As a result of this “banking” model of education, students and teachers were cognizant of market-driven values such as competition and individualism that are imposed on them by this educational marketplace. In understanding the relationship between the market values and education, participants uncovered the prevailing hegemony that Peter McLaren (1989) speaks of. McLaren (1989) contends that in a capitalist society the dominant curriculum assumes an instrumentalist approach that only furthers capitalist values. Participants not only were aware of these relationships but were vehemently critical of the effect competition and individualism have on their self-image and their social relationships. Some students like Santiago, a senior at Colegio Manuel Montt, noted that because of years of indoctrination within this neoliberal education system, their sole goal in life was go to school and make money. However, it was through being exposed to different ways of thinking and living that Santiago began to rethink own career goals and is now thinking of becoming a doctor to give back to his community instead of following the path expected of him. At the micro level, students internalize practices that develop critical awareness and reflexivity incorporating them into their own lives. In terms of their social relationships, students like Raquel, a junior at Women’s Institute of Santiago, resisted allowing competition to affect her

interactions with her peers. Raquel notes that by practicing reflexivity inside and outside of the classroom students are able to keep negative effect of competition from affecting their relationships. Similarly, Simón, through his narrative, contends that in order to be truly critical of society, one must be critical of one's own actions and how they further perpetuates or challenges the status quo.

The second component of critical consciousness, being active agents, was evidenced by students' ownership over their education and their commitment to social justice. By ownership over their education, I mean that students moved away from the passive student role expected in the banking concept of education and instead moved toward an active, dialogical teacher-student relationship (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003). Students spoke about education as something that belonged to them and how they had autonomy within the educational system (See Figure 3). Students' autonomy in and outside of the classroom was a result of student empowerment. Many factors contributed to student empowerment, but the most important one was teacher-student relationships. Students' recalled moments when teachers made space for discussions of real world issues. Again, teachers in these schools resisted succumbing to the positivist approach to teaching and instead practiced problem-posing education (Freire 1994). They did so by making time and space in the classroom to incorporate students' lived experiences. For example, teachers like Sebastian, a history teacher at *Liceo Manuela de Saenz*, cultivated strong bonds with the students by bringing in students into the classroom. In this way, students gained autonomy in their education by being active participants in making meaning of the lessons. Another way in which students were empowered was through student centered teaching wherein teachers maintained high expectations of their students and practiced an affective approach to teaching being considerate of socio-emotional components of learning. Jorgelina, a history teacher at

Liceo Regional Técnico, best captured the empowering aspects of education when she emphasized the importance of the education system creating good people not simply useful workers. Students' commitment to social justice came through in their descriptions of their motivations to take action. Students framed their reasons to act in terms of a sense of solidarity and social responsibility. Thus, students having a broader awareness motivates them to take action, not only for their own individual benefit, but also as a commitment to others.

LIMITATIONS OF FINDINGS

Despite my familiarity with the language, there remained a cultural barrier that was somewhat lessened by my three previous months of residency in Chile and immersion in Chilean culture, but nonetheless still present. As a U.S. born Latina of Mexican descent, there are many aspects of Chilean culture, dialect, and history that I am not able to fully grasp. As a result, my interpretations of students' and teachers' thoughts reflect my being an outsider to Chilean culture and its education system but an insider to education in my aspirations of being a social studies secondary teacher. I do wonder how these findings would have differed if I had been an insider with respect to Chilean culture and education. Although this study was able to begin to shed light on a highly relevant but understudied issue, I encourage further investigation to be conducted on the Chilean educational market's effects on social relations, particularly in terms of consciousness-raising. Another limitation of this study is the time and resource constrictions. All of the research, data collection, and writing of the initial report was conducted over the course of only one month in 2018 and was done by one sole researcher. As such, there were a limited number of students and teachers that could be interviewed. Along the same lines, only students and teachers from a select group of schools known for exhibiting high levels of critical

consciousness were interviewed for this study and are thus not representative of the wider population of students and teachers in Chile.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, my goal in conducting this study was to investigate the ways in which education plays a role in the formation of a critical consciousness among Chilean youth. The guiding research question was: What role does education whether this be the educational system, school culture, or classroom instruction, have on the development of critical consciousness among Chilean youth? The analysis and discussion above has attempted to answer the research question by examining various aspects of public education in Chile, including the system's structure, the curriculum, and student-teacher relationships. The answer is not simple. Many factors within the education system and even outside of it contributed to the emergence of critical consciousness. This study found that influential factors included school culture, passionate teachers, and critical participatory dialogue. In terms of school culture, the high schools selected for this project were known for their social justice orientation. Much of what contributed to school culture were the different institutions' historical legacies, locations, and socio-economically diverse student populations. As to passionate teachers, their passion for teaching was motivated by their devotion to the students and to social justice. Lastly, critical participatory dialogue was present in different parts of the students' lives, from their classroom discussion to their peer interactions, and even within themselves. Together, these factors are telling of what critical pedagogy in practice can produce. From the school culture that expanded students' worldview to student-centered teaching that came as a result of passionate teachers and critical discussions, student and teachers together made a meaningful educational experience. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study reveals the role of education as both a site of socialization as well as means

of student empowerment and social transformation. In this manner, education in these spaces of resistance was not simply the transmission of information from the teacher to the student but rather a collaborative process in which all parties learned from each other. Despite the many flaws with the Chilean education system, students were still able to develop critical consciousness because of atypical spaces and agents of resistance such as the *liceos emblemáticos* and *liceos históricos* that were staffed by passionate teachers. As such, future research should continue to examine the promotion of critical consciousness not only in these atypical spaces and by agents of resistance, but across the broad Chilean educational landscape, to determine if similar or different themes emerge. Whether they are similar or different, we need to know the reasons why and what these reasons have to say about the current educational landscape in Chile.

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APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN THE FIELD

Figure 1:

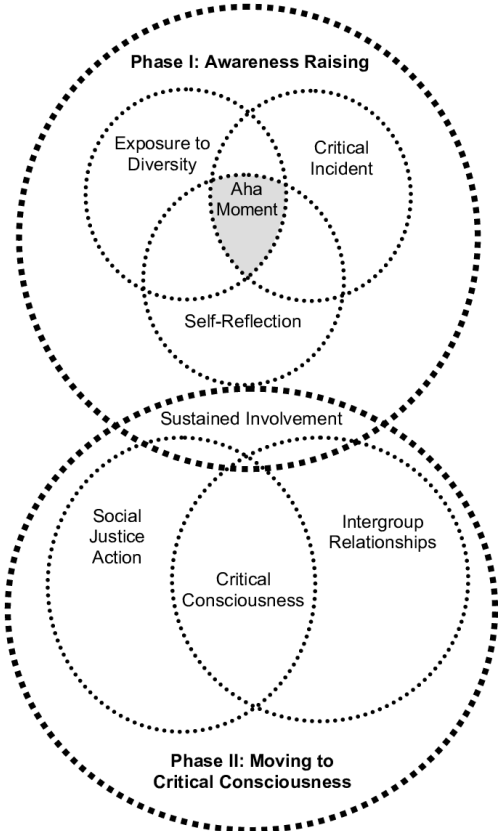


Figure 2: This picture was taken during a march with 30,000+ people in April 2018 in protest of the educational marketplace. Here, the banner in this picture says “if they [referring to the education system] commercialize it [education], we shall liberate it.” In this way, students are explicitly pointing to neoliberalism in this education market as something from which they need to be freed.



Figure 3: Mural at Liceo Técnico Regional that captures critical pedagogues' take on students not as empty containers but co-creators in their education who bring with them valuable outside knowledge.



Figure 4: As mentioned previously, while conducting my research in Santiago de Chile, there were numerous *tomas* or school take overs in support of the End to Sexist Education movement. This image is from a *toma* at the Instituto Pedagógico. I highlight this picture because it uses language that connotes a sense of solidarity. The poster says “Feminist takeover, sister I believe you.” Here, the use of “sister,” created a bond among strangers over shared experiences of being a woman in patriarchal, sexist society.



Figure 5: This picture highlights the many ways student are exposed to social justice issues. This picture was take outside of school in *toma* and all the flyers underscore one of the points of the End to Sexist Education movement. Many of the students talked about how seeing these flyers planted a seed of interest that then grew after discussing it in the classroom and among their friends.

