

From Concept to Classroom: Theoretical and Practical Approaches and Gaps to Multicultural
Education in Chile

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Introduction

“Los otros estudiantes nos dicen cosas como ‘Vete a tu país.’ Lo oímos mucho.”

“The other students tell us things like ‘Go back to your country.’ We hear this a lot.” I had been studying comparative education and social change in Santiago, Chile, for the past four months, and was now conducting an independent research project on the state of multicultural education there. I had been able to observe classes and recess time, as well as conduct informal interviews with teachers, school psychologists, and students in public elementary and middle schools whose student body was largely first-generation immigrants. The majority of these immigrants came from neighboring Latin American countries and told me of the variety of experiences they had had since arriving in Chile: how they were treated by their peers and teachers, what had been difficult and what had been enjoyable about living in Chile, and how they felt their schools could improve intercultural understanding and respect.

This particular quote came from two second-grade girls I spoke to during recess, one who was from Venezuela and the other from Paraguay. They both had overcome difficult family separations in order to settle in Chile, and even though they were from different countries, they had quickly become friends, connected by their identity as “*extranjeras*,” or “foreigners,” and by the way their Chilean counterparts treated them in school.

I was struck by their candidness, and humbled to have learned from the students and staff themselves of how the current approach to multicultural education was affecting them, and how it might be improved. When I presented my final project in June to a crowd of teachers, psychologists, principals, administrators, journalists, and students from elementary school up to the university level, I knew I had only begun to scratch the surface of this complex topic. My experience in Chile compelled me to continue this research for my senior Capstone project, a

project that is as expansive as it is intricate, a nuanced interaction of the personal and the political, and a dynamic relationship between history and the present.

Firstly, I wish to address my own positionality in conducting this research. As a White citizen of the United States studying in an elite private institution, I cannot and never intend to speak for the populations and their unique experiences that I describe in this research project. While the ethnographic data I present in this project was gathered directly from my fieldwork in Santiago, I recognize that I spent a short amount of time in this field, and that the small sample of opinions and personal experiences I documented and write about cannot represent those of all school employees and students in Chile. I have made every effort to represent the opinions and experiences they shared with me in a responsible and respectful way, and to clarify that my arguments are derived from my own synthesis of the individual and public information I have analyzed. Furthermore, I recognize that much of what has been written about Latin America from the position of a researcher in the United States is, unsurprisingly, through a “Western” lens and applies critical theory frameworks from the United States onto issues unique to Latin American countries. Acknowledging this, and recognizing my own potential biases having grown up reading largely Western works in my own educational career, I still find it important for my project to include literature on critically relevant and multicultural pedagogy from U.S. writers and researchers in order to build a global framework of theory and practice. I hope to situate the present dynamic between education and immigration in Chile within a broader context in order to more deeply explore my research question of how Chile addresses present-day immigration in its educational system.

The topic of immigration has increasingly become a hot-button issue in the political and public arena of Chilean society in the past decade. According to the most recent data report from

2015, Chile has become the country in Latin America with the fastest-growing immigrant population (Mohor & Haynie, 2017). Even though the overall population of immigrants is still relatively small (about 3%) compared to the population as a whole, the recent swell of immigrants from the Caribbean especially have drawn more public and political attention to the issue of immigration. This is due in part to the fact that Chile had a minimal Black population before this wave of immigration began. Therefore, Chilean society is now grappling with incidents of racial and class-based discrimination and violence in response to the increased heterogeneity of its urban centers. Housing prices in low-income neighborhoods have risen due to landlords' manipulation of incoming immigrants, hurting both Chilean citizens and migrants looking for a place to live. Many families openly reject immigrant students in their children's schools, and several high-profile incidents of violence have rippled through the media in recent years, further stirring public controversy on the issue (Mohor & Haynie, 2017). In May of 2016, a Haitian man was stabbed by his Chilean coworker "who accused him of coming to 'steal jobs,'" a view shared by 63% of Chileans (Mohor & Haynie, 2017), and in July of 2017, two Peruvian brothers were set on fire by a mob of Chilean fishermen (Kozak, 2017).

The tensions and fears surrounding the immigration debate set the stage for Chile's presidential election this past November. Michelle Bachelet, Chile's president from 2006-2010 and 2014-2018, espoused a generally progressive vision of immigration policy reform and emphasized her commitment to keeping Chile a welcoming country for immigrants. However, Sebastian Piñera, who was Chile's president from 2010-2014 and recently began his second term in March 2018, included a tougher approach to immigration policy in his platform (Mohor & Haynie, 2017). Piñera promised to tighten border controls and, while remaining open to immigrants who contribute to the financial growth of the country, indicated it was equally as

necessary to deport “criminal” migrants. Piñera’s hardline approach speaks to a majority (57%) of Chileans who believe that the country should implement more restrictive border policies (Mohor & Haynie, 2017). It is clear that the issue will likely continue to generate tensions and hostility as immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries and the Caribbean continue their efforts to begin new lives in Chile. With the transition of power now shifting to President Piñera once again, it remains to be seen if he carries out his promises of implementing stricter immigration laws, and whether they increase public hostility towards immigrants.

It is first and foremost necessary to define several terms that are central to my research project concerning multicultural education. Although there are multiple definitions and frameworks of multicultural education, the definition I will be working with describes it as a form of education whose objective is to “create equality of opportunity for students of different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, or cultural groups” (Aguado, 2010; Banks, 1996). For the purposes of my research, I will mostly focus on differentiating students by ethnic backgrounds (country of origin) since my research has to do with immigration; however, race, socioeconomic status and opportunity, and culture are all closely intertwined with this category, and cannot necessarily be separated. Another term that is sometimes used interchangeably with multicultural education is “intercultural education.” In the context of Latin America, and in Chile specifically, “intercultural education” is used to describe educational programs that attempt to address the “linguistic, cultural and political diversities of the indigenous populations,” which is how I will be operationalizing the term for my own comparative standpoint (Abarca Cariman, 2015).

Finally, another key term that is a central focus of the structures I analyze is “neoliberalism.” Although there is some debate about its specific features, neoliberalism is “often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve

human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital” (Smith, 2018). As the prevailing economic model that underlies most of Chilean societal structures and values, it is an important term to understand and contextualize.

Broadly, my Capstone project attempts to fill the gap in the literature on multicultural education in Chile by investigating the way the state addresses the current phenomenon of immigration within its education system. I identified and explored some of the theoretical and practical approaches currently in place, as well as a number of obstacles that impede the process of implementing more transformative education. I evaluated the explicit and implicit goals of multicultural education in Chile, mainly through an analysis of curricular proposals and guidelines for implementation from the Ministry of Education of Chile (MINEDUC). I was then able to connect data I collected from my interviews and observations in Chile in the spring of 2017 to draw connections between the ways Chile does and does not incorporate the reality of immigration in its education system.

A review of Chile’s political and social history, an analytical comparison of Chilean attitudes and discriminatory policies present in “intercultural education,” and literature on Chilean attitudes towards immigrants will serve as my framework for defining the process of categorizing the immigrant as the “other,” an important theme that arose in my interviews and that is explored in detail in the “gaps and challenges” section of this paper. Additionally, I will analyze scholarship on intercultural education that argues that policies for indigenous education in Chile are, at best, inconsistent and superficial, in order to provide a point of comparison for my own research, which approaches an understudied topic from a similar angle.

Multicultural education is a crucial topic to analyze from this perspective, because a country's educational approach to human values such as respect and justice is a foundation for other structures concerning imbalances in power, access of opportunity, and discrimination on individual and systemic levels. Through my Capstone project, I hope to highlight and synthesize these critical issues, provide insight as to the present state of Chilean multicultural education and its influences from the past, and lastly, offer some visions for the future.

Aims and Limitations

I am not certain that this project will ever reach a point where it would be responsible or productive to provide some kind of policy proposal because, as I found from my interviews and from my literature review, it is nearly impossible to change such deeply ingrained structural inequalities without a concerted mass motivation. The most radical curriculum in the world cannot disrupt these inequalities if it is not implemented by actors who are genuinely willing to disrupt them. I recognize that the individuals and groups in power must be willing to sacrifice some of their power in order to make these structural changes, and from the scope of my research, I cannot definitively say how or if that might happen.

Therefore, this is not the aim of my Capstone. While I ultimately do hope to have uncovered novel patterns in the way that the Chilean state addresses immigration and multiculturalism in its education system and curricular frameworks, my broadest and most basic goal is to shed light on the complexity of this issue and the real, human consequences it might have on the students it intends to help.

In this project, I explore some of the ways the concepts and objectives outlined in the MINEDUC documents I chose to analyze have been implemented in a small sample of public schools in Santiago. I elaborate on several of the prominent challenges identified on the

governmental and/or school levels in terms of implementing multicultural education, as well as some salient gaps between the concepts and goals of the government and the ability and effectiveness of implementation on the classroom level. Overall, I explore important themes that emerged through my research: that the reality of implementing any kind of multicultural education is shaped by Chile's past and present history of colonization, dictatorship, and neoliberalism, its struggle to define a “Chilean” identity in contrast to the “other,” and various practical challenges such as lack of teacher preparation, community or individual resistance to change, lack of resources and guidance in implementation, and lack of formal assessment or evaluation of the implementation of multicultural initiatives and their effectiveness.

Literature Review

My project is situated at the intersection of multicultural education theory and practice, history of and attitudes towards immigration in Chile (focusing on the most recent waves of immigration from neighboring Latin American countries and the Caribbean), and political theories of citizenship and democracy.

History of immigration and education in Chile

Chile bears a tumultuous history of both education and immigration policy. Several phases in the last century, including the Presidential Republic era from 1925 until the fall of Salvador Allende’s government in 1973, the military coup and dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet from 1973 to 1990, and the present-day systems of democracy and neoliberalism have shaped the way the country has approached waves of migration and how this is reflected in its education system.

In the first historical phase, the general public and academic consensus was that it was the state's responsibility to educate all citizens and promote their upward social mobility. Grant and Lei (2001) posit that three main factors converged in this period: the understanding that the upper class was responsible for implementing its ideology in the public sphere, the belief that public education was a cornerstone of a democratic society, and the belief that education is the path for "individual and collective social and economic advancement." From 1960-1973, the global context of the Cold War and the rise of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity party influenced the movement towards democratization, modernization, and development of many structures and public services, including education (Grant and Lei, 2001). Throughout these first few phases, waves of immigration had mostly come from Europe, which aligns with the Chilean government's history of subsidizing European immigration to "whiten" the indigenous population. The first half of the 20th century also included a wave of Arab immigration, due to unrest in the Ottoman Empire of the time.

Chile's relationship to education and immigration policy shifted dramatically with the military coup of 1973 and installment of the dictator Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet privatized education along with many other public services in order to push the country towards capitalism and, ultimately, neoliberalism (Grant and Lei, 2001). The implementation of neoliberalism in Chile was a joint effort between the U.S. government and the new Chilean government. A group of Chilean economists known as the "Chicago Boys," who trained under Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger at the University of Chicago, worked to turn Chile into the "neoliberal experiment" of Latin America; with the U.S.'s support of the military coup, the dictatorship gave the Chicago Boys free reign to remake the Chilean economy as an "experiment of unregulated capitalism" (Cypher, 2004). This began the free-market competition model of schools that

persists in Chile today. The neoliberal system increasingly embedded social and economic inequality in educational structures, which prominent student movements in recent decades have fought to change (Kubal & Fisher, 2016; Cabalin, 2012).

Finally, immigration during the dictatorship became much more strictly controlled, with the Immigration Act of 1975 positioning immigration as an issue of national security and portraying immigrants as foreign threats (Doña-Reveco and Levinson, 2012). This period exemplified the underlying sociocultural theory that Chilean education has been a system produced by and for a specific type of Chilean citizen and national identity (Poblete Melis, 2009).

From the end of the military dictatorship in 1990 to the present-day government of Sebastian Piñera, education has remained privatized under the neoliberal model, and thus a reinforcer of great income inequality in the country (Zelaya, 2015). Economic progress in Chile combined with economic and political turmoil in neighboring Latin American countries has attracted more migrants in recent decades, bolstered by presidencies such as those of Lagos and Bachelet, which modernized border policies and attempted to make Chile a more open, immigrant-friendly country (Doña-Reveco and Levinson, 2012). Most of these migrants are Peruvian, Argentinian, Bolivian, Colombian, and, increasingly, from Caribbean countries such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Pedemonte and Dittborn, 2016).

Responses to the different waves of immigration Chile has experienced in the past century reveal societal attitudes towards certain cultural groups, many of which are laden with racist and classist biases. Carl Solberg's work documents the history of the elite class's control over the economic, intellectual, and political life of Chile, arguing that its response to waves of immigration preceding World War I contributed to the rise in nationalist thought and action that

defined this time period (1970). He provides evidence that in the early 20th century, political and social thinkers and writers began propagating “pseudoscientific racial theories” (18) that placed value upon whiter Chileans and Northern European immigrants, while demoting indigenous or mixed-race Chileans and darker-skinned immigrants to the more undesirable end of the spectrum.

Considering this history, many contemporary scholars conduct experimental or correlational research that explore the elements of Chilean biases and prejudices towards different immigrant groups. Through an online survey experiment that assessed the ways in which Chilean individuals perceive immigrants with “certain economic skill profiles,” Duncan F. Lawrence concludes that Chilean attitudes towards immigrants are based on their expectations and assumptions about which kind of immigrant will contribute most to the country’s overall economic growth (2013). This aligns with the system of neoliberalism that has prevailed in Chile since the dictatorship, suggesting that attitudes towards immigration may be influenced by individual and collective adherence to neoliberal principles that reproduce and maintain classist hierarchies. These classist hierarchies, in turn, affect the way certain groups of immigrants are perceived and, quite literally, valued in Chilean society. This result is also in contrast to attitudes rooted in “fears of individual economic competition,” or the common idea existing across the globe that immigrants “steal” jobs from more deserving citizens.

Addressing another hierarchy that dominates Chilean attitudes towards immigrants, the Chilean sociologist María Emilia Tijoux evaluates the dichotomy between the “Chilean” and the “black immigrant” through interviews with immigrants living in Chile (2014). Her data reveals that the attitudes and stereotypes immigrants possess of themselves and other ethnic groups, as well as the ways they believe Chileans perceive them, are dependent on more than just skin

color. Immigrants and Chileans alike categorize themselves and others largely based on nationality, a finding consistent with the patterns I noted from my own interviews with students in Santiago. Tijoux also makes a distinction between the class of immigrants that Chileans have generally received in a more welcoming way and who have had an easier time assimilating—“whiter” and wealthier immigrants such as Argentinians, North Americans, and Europeans—and those who are at the center of the immigration debate and who are met with greater discrimination and systemic obstacles in their attempts to integrate into society—the “darker-skinned” immigrants such as Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Bolivians, Colombians, Haitians, and Dominicans. Again, this echoes similar sentiments I heard from students, teachers, and school psychologists in Santiago, and is the reason I chose to specifically focus on the latter category of immigrants in this project. Finally, Tijoux explains how the perception and categorization of “otherness” operates to demarcate the “white” Chilean as an entirely separate identity that is defined in opposition to the identity it should exclude or separate. This identity, the identity of the “other,” is that of the “black immigrant” (Tijoux, 2014).

As previously addressed in the overview of Chile’s history of education, schools have always been places in which dominant national theories of citizenship, social standards, and attitudes towards “outsiders” can be taught and normalized. However, empirical studies such as those reviewed tend not to provide suggestions of how to apply such results in an actual educational setting. How do schools, especially primary schools, begin to teach either tolerance or intolerance for the “other,” and how does school curricula and culture reflect broader societal and political attitudes of the time?

While the existing literature may not include many educational applications, some empirical research on attitudes towards immigrants includes suggestions for contextualizing the

significance of research findings in terms of policy applications. One such study by Gonzales and Kessler aimed to test existing understandings of the way interactions with different individuals and communities might affect intergroup perceptions and relationships (2010). They presented evidence to support the claim that a policy that increases intergroup contact may have a positive effect on increasing tolerance, decreasing prejudice, and improving the experience of immigrants arriving and living in Chile.

A limitation of this study, and of similar literature on intergroup relations in Chile, is that Latin American immigration into Chile is a relatively new phenomenon, and thus lacks substantial scholarly analysis and discussion. Given that Peruvians are the largest immigrant demographic in Chile at this point in time, the scope of this study focuses only on relations between Chileans and Peruvian immigrants. Follow-up studies would be effective if they are able to situate these findings within a dynamic understanding of Chilean relations to and perceptions of other stigmatized immigrant groups (such as Venezuelans, Colombians, and Haitians) in their communities. Although Peruvians made up the majority of immigrant students in the schools in Santiago in which I conducted my research, there was still significant diversity in the countries of origin of many other immigrant students. Multicultural education cannot only be geared towards the inclusion, facilitation of critical thought, and disruption of dyadic hierarchies of the “majority minority” group. The structure (curriculum) and agents (teachers and students) must be able to effectively learn about all different cultures and use this knowledge to enact change in a variety of settings.

Political theories of citizenship and democracy

Political theories of citizenship and democracy are closely intertwined with historical patterns of immigration, education, and economics—particularly, the neoliberal system in Chile that creates the foundation of many sociopolitical attitudes and public systems such as education. The work of Mario Snazjder, Luis Roninger, and Carlos Forment (2013) addresses the complicated question of what it means to be a citizen, acknowledging its definition as being “part of a community” and approaching what that means in terms of both a “political community and an economic community” (411). The authors assess the history of the free-market economy in Chile, questioning whether this economic history has been conducive or contradictory to cultural and political perspectives on inclusive citizenship.

Furthermore, the authors provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence to support the claim that the free-market model has, while encouraging workers to immigrate from neighboring Latin American countries, also worsened economic, social, and educational segregation and “labor discrimination” that targets migrant communities (419). However, their qualitative evidence stemming from interviews mostly includes conversations with and analysis of the views of the political elite. In this way, their work omits the opinions and lived experiences of the working class in favor of broader political and economic theory on the topic and what the general public opinion might be. To attempt to address this theory-reality gap in data collection and analysis, my research project includes ethnographic data I gathered from non-elite members of Chilean society who are directly engaging with the new demographic reality of the country, and who can provide unique and invaluable perspectives on this issue.

The question of who belongs and has the right to participate in a given society extends beyond the legal definition of citizenship, into the systems that countries utilize to define and create the desired “citizen.” Carlos Alberto Torres investigates the ways social structures are

maintained and reproduced through formal education and navigates the relationship between the state, education, and power by exposing dynamics and tensions that are often implicit in both policy and practice (1998). According to him, theories of citizenship relate to the negotiation of problems between citizens and between citizens and the state.

Theories of democracy negotiate power struggles between social agents, connecting “established— hidden and explicit— forms of social and political power” with the structures of systems that create the foundation of a democratic government (3). Theories of multiculturalism connect identity with the politics of culture and education, and have become prevalent in recent years as a way of highlighting the importance of the intersectionality of identity in a way that the state, through the politics of citizenship and democracy, largely does not. Torres argues that the politics of democracy and citizenship are mainly concerned with promoting a unified identity (a “solidarity”), rather than individualizing each citizen or participant of the democratic system (3).

Theories of democracy and citizenship have, like education, almost always been written and decided upon by a homogenous sector of society (straight, white, male), and have quite often excluded many social groups identifiable by markers such as race, class, gender, religion, and ability. Finally, all three types of theory deal with defining and navigating identity as well as the “limits and possibilities of forms of sociability” that guide interactions between different kinds of people (3). All of these elements are present in the space of a school, especially a school that represents a diversity of cultural origins. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate all three theories in the framework of my project, but also to ground them in my analysis of how schools actually navigate concepts of citizenship and democracy within the context of multiculturalism via curriculum, events, classroom interactions, and so on.

Multicultural education, intercultural education, and culturally relevant pedagogy

Multicultural education is a thread that runs through and connects the fields of immigration and political theories of citizenship and democracy. It encompasses the politics, beliefs, and actions of radical inclusion, as well as the recognition and challenging of oppressive norms and the formation of avenues towards a more equitable society.

The multicultural education theory that I operationalize as the foundation for my own research is largely rooted in theories of critical pedagogy and anti-racist pedagogy, both of which aim to transform individuals and communities by encouraging critical thought and active application of knowledge into practice. Paulo Freire famously described the state of “banking education,” in which a teacher “deposits” knowledge into the receptacle of the student and no critical thought or mutual learning (1970). There is nothing transformative about the model of “banking” education, which Freire calls “dehumanizing” on both ends, arguing that it serves to reproduce hierarchies of oppression. Instead, he posits a theory of “conscientization” (a term he coins in this foundational work), and advocates for a “problem-posing” model of education. To liberate both sides, the educator must learn from the students just as the students learn from them. The possession of knowledge is disrupted, and both agents are seen as “conscious beings” that mediate each other’s growth and liberation (79-80).

The educational theorist and researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings has posited one of the most progressive pedagogies in recent history with her theory of “culturally relevant pedagogy” (1995a, 1995b). In “Towards a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” Ladson-Billings acknowledges the work that had been done at this point in time in the field of education reform. She specifically cites Shulman’s 1987 article that considers a range of different perspectives not previously considered in teacher selection and teacher education, and recognizes his argument to

consider students' own knowledge and the relevance of the educational context instead of having a more rigid teacher-student relationship.

She also references a range of other terms, coined by previous scholars who have worked with students outside of the culturally dominant demographic, to highlight the efficacy of different forms of "culturally appropriate" approaches to education (466-7). Some important studies and works to note are Au & Jordan (1981), who found that Native Hawaiian students scored higher on standardized tests when teachers allowed them to use a traditional language interaction style called "talk-story;" Molnatt & Erickson (1981), who found that Native American students demonstrated higher academic performance when teachers used language interaction patterns that correlated with the students' home language patterns, as well as when teachers used "mixed forms" (similar to the "code-switching" competency that Ladson-Billings uses to describe African-American students); and Jordan (1985), who describes "cultural compatibility" as the process of using the students' home culture as a guide for the academic progression of the classroom.

While acknowledging the path these works paved, Ladson-Billings critiques the authors' (and teachers') definition of "success." By their framework, "success" is measured by the student's ability to effectively assimilate or fit into the dominant culture in order to "succeed" by the meritocratic terms of that society. Due to this, Ladson-Billings argues that previous studies and theories have only served to further reproduce structural inequities and require disenfranchised students to work within the limits of their hierarchical status as the "other." Villegas (1998) asserts that attempts to make education more "culturally sensitive" must acknowledge and address the political element of schooling, that which relies on producing a hierarchy of "successful" students and citizens. While Ladson-Billings agrees with Villegas's

broader connection of schooling to societal structure, she points to a gap in the rest of the literature in investigating and explaining instances of academic success for African American students. In order to address this gap, she introduces her novel theoretical concept of “culturally-relevant pedagogy,” which aims to encourage academic achievement, the “acceptance and affirmation of cultural identity,” and, perhaps most importantly, the development of “critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (469). With this emphasis, Ladson-Billings moves beyond the work of previous scholars and pushes for an educational model that allows for and encourages students to disrupt the societal hierarchies schools are built on.

In her three-year study of “excellent teachers” in low-income, African-American school districts, Ladson-Billings did not find patterns across teaching style or personality; rather, she found commonalities in the teachers’ personal beliefs and approaches to teaching as a profession and civic responsibility (1995a, 478). The “exceptional” teachers all “identified strongly with teaching” and felt themselves to be deeply connected to the community they had chosen to teach in, possessed a strong belief that each student “could and must succeed” and saw it as their responsibility to guide the students to success, positioned students as center of learning and maintained “fluid and equitable relationships” with them, and encouraged collaborative, community-oriented learning (1995b). Most teachers also found ways to transform the mandated curriculum into one that aligned with their values and beliefs that it was their responsible to teach with a critical perspective. Furthermore, the teachers Ladson-Billings identified as “exceptional” were highly aware of the social and political underpinnings of the content they presented, and used their position to facilitate students’ critical thought and action towards real-life structural

inequities. In this way, the teachers Ladson-Billings closely observed and interviewed seemed to be operating at the highest levels of the theories of James Banks (1996, 1998).

Banks's "Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content" (1996) served as the primary theoretical framework for my data collection and organization in Santiago in 2017. In his theory, he describes four levels of multicultural education, from least transformative (and most common) to most transformative (and least common). The first level, the "contributions" approach, focuses on the celebration of historical figures and festivals of different cultures. The second level, the "additive" approach, incorporates issues and perspectives unique to different cultural groups without changing the structure of the curriculum. The third level, the "transformative" approach, changes the structure of the curriculum in order to present material and current events from the points of view of different cultural groups. The fourth level, the "social action" approach, includes an orientation towards social justice that mediates students' learning. At this level, students would be able to express and enact ideas about conflict resolution, critically analyze mediums of communication that perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce oppressive systems, and engage with and challenge political and social systems. This fourth level is what might be considered truly critical pedagogy in Freire's and Ladson-Billings's terms; it is the level at which students become empowered to think critically about the society and systems they have been socialized into, and to apply the skills and knowledge they gain in the classroom to challenge these systems and enact social change (Banks, 1996).

Furthermore, the scholar Carmen Montecinos highlights the aspect of a "multicultural" education that allows all students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and acknowledges how this can be complicated due to the intersectionality of identity and the multiplicity of social identities that are formed by and for the individual student (1995). This is

especially salient in current scholarship and national discussion about indigenous education in Chile, which has been a prominent debate in the fields of politics and education long before the phenomenon of recent immigration began to receive attention.

Ximena Martínez Trabucco references Montecinos to explain that indigenous students are expected to learn about their own culture as well as learn about and assimilate to the dominant Chilean culture; the EIB (Intercultural Bilingual Education) policies are not about educating *all* students in Chile equally about indigenous culture, rights, and movements (2014). Instead, they serve to “other” indigenous students, putting the responsibility to learn about their culture solely on them while simultaneously continuing to devalue it. She highlights the superficiality of a supposedly “inclusive” curriculum that actually just reinforces and maintains oppressive hierarchies.

Martínez Trabucco concludes that the OECD “has reinforced, through the curriculum, the principles that underpin the neoliberal individual that also connects with notions of cosmopolitanism.” She connects human capital and education, exposing the impossible contradiction of expecting indigenous people, who have been “deprived of power to participate in society,” to be “responsible for its transformation” in the ways outlined by the EIB. The scholarship on inclusive education in Chile specifically has predominantly focused on the issue of intercultural, or indigenous, education. This is a crucial comparison point for my own research questions and preliminary hypothesis, since multicultural education has not yet been studied in the same way as intercultural education has.

The lack of scholarship on this particular phenomenon has real consequences; previous literature highlights the importance of having culturally sensitive teachers in classrooms, who have the skills and qualities necessary to create an environment in which students can experience

academic, personal, emotional, and social growth (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Morales Mendoza, Sanhueza Henríquez, Friz Carrillo, & Riquelme Bravo, 2017). Due to the recent surge in immigration into Chile, the new multicultural context presents significant challenges to educators, which manifest and reproduce themselves in a sort of negative feedback loop. The minimal and inadequate teacher training geared to prepare educators to work in a multicultural context combined with the reality of the multicultural context creates uncomfortable, difficult situations for both teachers and students. Without proper training as for how to navigate these situations, both sides become reluctant and resistant to implement any kind of transformative multicultural education.

Overall, it is critical to direct research efforts towards evaluating and contextualizing multicultural education in Chile to parallel literature on intercultural education in Chile as well as general theory and discourse on critical pedagogy and anti-racist education.

Methodology

In the spring of 2017, I conducted ethnographic research in four public schools in Santiago, Chile that all had a significant percentage of first and second generation immigrant children. In three of the schools, the percentage of first-generation immigrant children was more than half of the student population (52%, 58% and 65%), and in one of the schools, it was slightly less than half (approximately 43%). There were few foreign students who came from North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The vast majority came from Latin American countries: Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and some from Argentina and Uruguay.

My research methods were qualitative; they included participatory observation in classes, meetings, and school activities, informal conversations with students and teachers, and formal

interviews with 5 teachers, 4 psychologists, and 1 social worker. All interviews focused on the experience of professionals working with the diversity and multiculturalism of children in their school. I asked questions about school culture, the challenges immigrant children encountered, how the school addressed issues of multiculturalism and interculturalism, and what they thought were the major gaps or challenges in their individual school, the educational system, or Chilean society as a whole. The design of the interviews was semi-structured. Some interviews took only 15 minutes, and others lasted for more than an hour. Most were around 20 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish, and all transcriptions and translations are my own. Names have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of my interviewees.

Beyond analyzing my existing interview data from last spring, I also read several documents produced by the Ministry of Education of Chile (MINEDUC) having to do with issues of multicultural or “inclusive” education, suggestions for addressing and improving immigrant students’ experiences in the classroom and the school social environment, and how to adapt pedagogical approaches to account for the increasing cultural diversity of the country. Besides reading information provided directly on the MINEDUC’s website, the specific documents I chose to read and analyze were: “Discrimination in the school space: guidelines for promoting an inclusive school” (2013), “Ideas for introducing human rights into the classroom: simple, everyday messages for promoting human rights” (2012), “Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities” (2016), “Program for School Integration” or “PIE” (2009), and “Technical guidelines for the PIE” (2013). All primary source documents were in Spanish, and all translations are my own.

I tried to keep some key questions in mind as I analyzed these primary sources, such as: Who is this material written by, and who is it written for? What are the short-term goals and

long-term goals posited through this source? Are the goals and motivations implicit or explicit? What patterns can I identify across different mediums, and how do they compare to the lived experiences I heard about through my interviews? Ultimately, I aimed to synthesize my interview data and document analysis by drawing connections between the approaches and gaps to multicultural education identified in one or both sources. Where do these gaps and approaches overlap, and where do they contradict each other? What evidence indicates that there are initiatives that are working, and why? What evidence indicates that there are initiatives not being effectively implemented, and why not? Lastly, how can I situate what is and isn't working within the theoretical framework I explored in my literature review?

Findings and Analysis

Theoretical and practical approaches

Transition to the “transformative”

One of the most consistent objectives in all of the MINEDUC documents I analyzed was the understanding that implementing “transformative” change, that which shifts the focus of multicultural education from integration to inclusion, is a difficult and gradual process that must begin with realistic steps:

“We must take into account that the incorporation of an inclusive approach is a process of gradual transformation; therefore, requiring a foundation of initial transformations, progressively moving towards developing goals that permeate the policies and institutional culture of each school.” (*“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016, p. 22*)

“The objective of this material is to generate reflection in educational communities, illuminate everyday discriminatory practices, and in so doing, gradually create a more inclusive culture and a peaceful, respectful, and supportive coexistence in all of the schools in our country.” (*“Discrimination in the school space,” 2013, p. 5*)

While overall I believe that the MINEDUC does not provide enough concrete guidelines for implementation in classrooms, it does posit a clear vision that the guidelines it provides to begin to move towards this eventual “transformation” should be implemented within the framework and tools that each school already possesses (“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016). Since the 2015 Law of Inclusion requires every school to come up with a “plan to support inclusion,” the MINEDUC believes that instead of schools attempting to incorporate an entirely new pedagogical strategy to address cultural diversity and respect, they should adjust their existing instruments and institutional procedures. These might include their Institutional Education Project, Plan for Improvement, Administrative Regulations, or other materials that the school uses to define its values, standards, and plans for action.

The government documents I analyzed put forth a vision of schools that are “free of arbitrary discrimination” and educational communities that are “spaces of discovery and learning of students from diverse backgrounds” (“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016, p. 5). The MINEDUC expects individual schools to take on the responsibility of revising their own standards to align with these governmental objectives. This may include removing any “language, principles or measures that allow for exclusion” (“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016, p. 5), teachers recognizing their daily habits and practices that might unintentionally reinforce negative cultural stereotypes (“Ideas for introducing human rights in the classroom,” 2012), or administrators taking action to reorganize class schedules and extracurricular activities so that students of different backgrounds and academic trajectories might come in contact with each other. This will supposedly de-segregate the school and shape spaces of belonging in which all students can express their

diverse interests and knowledge (“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016).

Through my interviews and observations at four public schools in Santiago with significant percentages of immigrant students, I was able to see many of these initial steps towards an “inclusive education” in practice. A psychologist in one of the schools addressed the shift from simply integrating and assimilating diverse students towards trying to change the curriculum and teaching strategies to better meet those students’ unique backgrounds and learning trajectories:

“We’re transitioning...from the affective (understanding each other, teaching with care) to the integration of technical things within the curriculum (how to educate them in today’s context, connecting what each student is learning with their personal life story, understanding what each one knows); this is what’s driving the change.

You have to try to connect the abstract material, that has nothing to do with you [a student], with your story, your life, what you have learned...I wouldn’t say we’re there yet...we’re transitioning to that...to integrating a curriculum that has to do with the student...I think a goal for the curriculum could be to tell the story of immigration, to tell the story of Latin America that includes the perspectives and histories of all people.”
–*Matias, school psychologist*

Matias addresses the transition that the MINEDUC posits as its ultimate goal, and, in suggesting teaching the history of immigration in Latin America, even goes beyond any of the concrete MINEDUC initiatives I read. The closest I was able to find was a suggestion in “Ideas for introducing human rights in the classroom,” which outlined some objectives and strategies for teaching about indigenous histories in Chilean classrooms (2012, p. 62). While this could certainly be a useful comparative framework to take in implementing a similar approach for multicultural histories, I did not come across any concrete curricular suggestions for addressing the past and present issues of immigration in the same way schools address intercultural education and indigenous history, language, culture, and present political struggles. This

indicates that although the MINEDUC may be taking initial steps to address the issue of multicultural education, it is possible that it is just as (or even more) superficial in its implementation as its Bilingual Intercultural Program has been (Martínez Trabucco, 2014). However, it is still important to acknowledge the first steps that are being taken, and that actors in the schools are thinking about how they might push even further in this “transformative” direction.

Banks’s levels of integrating multicultural content

Within the framework of James Banks’s theory of multicultural education, all of the schools I observed in were clearly operating on at least the first two levels of his theory: the contributions and the additive levels (Banks, 1996). Each school had some kind of festival or day of celebration during the school year in which the students could represent and celebrate their culture; they were given the opportunity to talk about their culture or the culture of their parents, bring in a traditional dish, perform a traditional dance, and divide themselves into sports teams based on their nationality. According to the adults I interviewed, these events allow immigrant children to recognize their own identities and remember their roots and traditions, while also allowing the school to celebrate its own diversity. These events align with Banks’s first level of “contributions” by providing an effective way to recognize and celebrate the variety and uniqueness of different cultures, albeit often in symbolic and superficial ways.

All of the schools also demonstrated evidence of operating at Banks’s second level, the “additive” level; they add concepts, themes, and perspectives from other cultures or countries without changing the structure of the curriculum in a radical way. For example, professionals in all of the schools commented that students who come from different countries use different vocabulary than Chilean Spanish does. They recognize the importance of taking this “learning

difference” into consideration when they design the material and tests in their class; if some of the students are confused as a result of these different words, the teachers then use the opportunity to expand the vocabulary of *all* the students by defining and explaining the different words. Similarly, another teacher told me about her school’s efforts to incorporate Creole into the classroom and school environment, since many of their new students were coming from Haiti and tended to struggle more in their adjustment to Chilean Spanish than other Latin American immigrants. Other examples of the additive level include a first-grade classroom that uses recipes from different countries to learn about and cook traditional food, and a math teacher who adjusts her tests and class materials to account for the ways that students from different countries write equations and mathematical symbols.

Perhaps my favorite example was an original book that one second grade class created, titled “Tell me your story.” The introduction to their book states “...if the school truly aims to open its doors to all students and families, and to effectively construct an educational community, it is necessary to relate the stories of each and every family; to get to know their motivations, sacrifices, and desires, to understand how much they left behind in their home country in pursuit of better opportunities, and everything that that implies.” This demonstrated the school’s commitment to include diverse cultural perspectives in their classroom, and furthermore, made the educational space meaningful to each child, since they saw themselves and their family’s story represented in the school material. These examples all demonstrate ways that the MINEDUC’s vision of inclusive and meaningful spaces and classroom materials can be created simply by making small adjustments to existing structures, strategies, and attitudes within the school.

At least one school I observed in demonstrated strategies aligned with Banks's third level of multicultural approaches, that of "transformations." Ariel, an 8th grade science teacher, explained to me that in his class's unit on natural resources, they were discussing current issues surrounding natural resources in various countries, such as comparing effects of smog levels in Chile and Venezuela. Students (including those from Chile and those from Venezuela) were given a platform to contribute their own personal knowledge on the topic, offer their experiences and criticisms, ask other students what their experiences had been, and learn about relevant issues from the perspectives and unique knowledge of their classmates. According to Ariel, we must "recognize the diversity that exists in our classrooms," "recognize the contribution of each country represented," and "enrich students' learning with the knowledge of their classmates." This type of work strengthens each student's own learning and critical thinking, as well as increasing understanding between students from different national origins. Once again, this demonstrates actions taken in alignment with the MINEDUC's vision of creating spaces in which all students can express their experiences and respect those of others. However, I do not know if these actions resulted directly from specific MINEDUC programming, or if they were the production of Ariel being a particularly motivated teacher who may have been trained in some form of culturally responsive pedagogy.

School Integration Program

One of the most prominent and oft-referenced programs created by the MINEDUC in 2009 is the "*Programa de Integración Escolar*," ("School Integration Program,") or "PIE." PIE is "an inclusive educational strategy whose purpose is to provide additional support (in the context of the typical classroom) to students who present Special Educational Needs (SEN), whether permanent or transitory; thus, enhancing participation in the classroom and achieving

the learning objectives of each and every student" ("School Integration Program," 2009, p.4).

According to the MINEDUC, the condition of being an immigrant student is considered a "transitory Special Educational Need." As such, PIE strategies are being implemented in schools with high percentages of immigrants; these strategies are parallel to strategies that may be utilized for students with physical and cognitive disabilities. My interviewees expressed a variety of opinions about the implementation and structure of the PIE, as evidenced by Sofia's description of some of the structural challenges:

"PIE is the governmental project that has to do with student integration. It's a lot of work for us and there is little help.... Before, children who had special learning needs used to go to the office of the differential learning assistant; now, she has to go to each classroom and work with them... It's been a problem for us, because for us, learning how to deal with diversity isn't just for students with learning difficulties, it's also for students who are behind in school because of cultural issues. For example, if I have a student who speaks Quechua at home, obviously her vocabulary will be at a much lower level than those who [speak Spanish,] so she might not even speak in class at all... This can be a problem in the classroom, trying to talk with the special education assistant, because when they do the tests, the materials and instruments are made for Chilean children, adapted to Chile; but, the majority of the children are not Chilean or at least not of 'totally Chilean' origin." –*Sofia, second grade teacher*

Sofia's concerns parallel a theme I discuss in greater detail in the "gaps and challenges" section: that the Chilean school system has long been designed for one type of student. Even with a program that has been specifically created for those with different learning abilities, the materials and approach are evidently meant for *Chilean* students with learning differences— not for students coming from other countries, whose labeled "learning difference" is simply that they are not Chilean. The MINEDUC's effort to provide schools with a way to integrate immigrant students is meant to be feasible and practical, by utilizing the same strategies, tools, and special assistants for immigrant students as for other students with "special education needs." However, it is worth considering whether it might actually be more effective and practical for the MINEDUC to provide schools with an entirely different set of instruments and guidelines geared

specifically towards immigrant students, instead of generalizing their needs with the complex and diverse needs of students with physical and cognitive disabilities, all of whom require different modifications.

Within the context of differing opinions on the effectiveness and challenges in implementing the PIE, I was able to observe at least one example of incorporating the PIE regulations and guidelines during my time in the schools.

I was able to observe a meeting between two psychologists, Javier and Vicente, and about ten students who were “the stars of the school;” they were class presidents or in some way represented their grade (they were in fifth to eighth grade). Among them were Chilean, Bolivian, Venezuelan, and Colombian children. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the components of the PIE applied in their school (i.e., discussing how effectively the “mission” or “values” of the PIE were being demonstrated in their school’s own mission and values), listen to student experiences, and generate ideas about how to improve school culture. Students openly shared their opinions, and the psychologists wrote down each suggestion, promising that they would continue to work with these students throughout the year to enact the change they wanted to see at their school. This is consistent with the MINEDUC’s claim that inclusive educational strategies are most effectively implemented by intertwining them with each school’s existing framework, and is furthermore an example of a space where students can express their opinions, feel heard and validated by professionals, and practice a form of democratic participation and active engagement with a political system on a small scale.

Theoretical and practical gaps and challenges

Systemic tensions

Community and individual resistance to change

Both the MINEDUC and my interviewees identified a variety of challenges in approaching the topic of multiculturalism in schools, and many of my interviewees further identified a number of gaps between the theories of the government and the practices in schools. The first notable challenge that was identified by both sources was resistance from educational communities or members to implementation of progressive pedagogy. In its overview of the PIE, the MINEDUC emphasizes the importance of school administrators being able to communicate the objectives of PIE and their significance to teachers, parents, students, and other members of the learning community. The MINEDUC advises administrators and teachers to anticipate and prepare for how to handle any pushback or resistance from any members of the community who “do not know how PIE contributes to the development of interaction between the entire educational community, with students who present Special Educational Needs, and especially those with disabilities.” (“School Integration Program,” 18) In this way, the MINEDUC acknowledges a potential gap in implementing their proposals; interestingly, they attribute this resistance to general societal ignorance, and specifically, societal ignorance about how successful the government’s plans can be if schools take on the responsibility of implementing them.

Although all the teachers and psychologists I spoke to emphasized their own personal commitment to including immigrant students and developing initiatives to improve multicultural education, they also indicated how challenging the issue is on a broader scale. Not all teachers or families are on board with this cultural change:

“Many teachers think that multiculturalism is ‘a problem;’ they think that students from other countries are not used to the level of Chilean education, that education is of a lower quality in the countries they are coming from.” –*Julieta, English teacher*

"It's interconnected with what the families bring to us. It has to be a mutual effort; if they aren't taking on the responsibility, then there are key people within the community who are not complying with these things" –*Valentina, school psychologist*

As previously indicated by the history and current public opinions surrounding immigration in Chile, there is a gap between the increasing cultural diversity of Chile's population and the actual level of tolerance and respect towards immigrants. In an attempt to explain why these key members might resist cultural and pedagogical change, my interviewees alluded to Chile's history of colonization and dictatorship, and how these political exertions combined with the permanent struggle to define a "Chilean" identity formed an educational institution designed for homogeneity, one that worked to "other" and discriminate against the "threat" of the immigrant, all within the broader systemic inequalities of neoliberalism. One psychologist explained to me that because of this history of the Chilean educational institution, some teachers feel that the "pillars of the institution are weakening" as a result of the push to address the influx of immigrants in classrooms. Therefore, they assert, some teachers or families resist this pedagogical shift due to their internalization of education as a tool to reinforce racial and socioeconomic hierarchies as have been historically produced and maintained.

The Chilean school as a space for homogenization, imaginary identity formation

The fact that the MINEDUC encourages schools to incorporate mechanisms of teaching and learning about diversity into the existent curriculum may actually be a major obstacle in the path towards achieving the "transformative" education they envision. Considering Chile's history of colonization, subsidization of European immigrants to "whiten" the culture, and creation of schools as spaces to form arbitrary Chilean citizens, the curriculum of Chile's public schools has long been one created by and for a homogeneous population:

“The curriculum isn’t designed for multiculturalism at all. It’s really segregated. The language in textbooks has nothing to do with multiculturalism; it’s all traditional stories, Chilean legends. It’s in no way inclusive; we haven’t confronted the new reality of our country.” –*Sofia, second grade teacher*

“The textbook, the curriculum, it’s not made for this [multicultural] context. It’s made for the dominant culture. Schools are spaces of socialization, for building ideas, new perspectives; the curriculum isn’t designed for [immigrant students,] it’s designed to homogenize these ideas and perspectives.

The school has children from different backgrounds, with different histories and ways of speaking...and the curriculum is based on the logic of creating a ‘cultural identity,’ a social, cultural, imaginary identity that is just the great myth of ‘being Chilean,’ or of being Peruvian, Bolivian, Haitian, Argentinian. In the end, this work that schools are doing to construct a national identity, it’s an extension of the school as a construction of the state to the school as a space of citizenship formation....For this reason, I don’t think that the ‘transition’ will ever be complete...how do we adapt such a closed curriculum to such a multicultural context?” –*Matias, school psychologist*

Both Sofia and Matias attribute the persisting homogeneous nature of the curriculum to Chile’s colonial history. They acknowledge that even though the current demographic makeup of the country and their classrooms is unmistakably diverse, the curriculum is still “segregated” and geared towards the “dominant culture” by presenting a limited perspective it hopes to instill in its citizens. Because of this, it is unlikely that any immigrant students see themselves represented in the curriculum and cannot connect to the material they are presented, which can affect their learning trajectory.

The understanding of the curriculum as designed by and for a homogeneous population is one that even the MINEDUC acknowledges:

“The curriculum, especially the elementary school curriculum, has a strong orientation towards the formation of a national identity; it has not yet challenged this orientation to reconcile with the right that each person has to have, maintain, and value their own nationality” (*Ideas for introducing human rights in the classroom, 2016, p. 46*)

The MINEDUC has clearly taken the first step in the “transformative” process by acknowledging Chile’s past and present orientation towards schools as a certain type of

citizenship formation. Despite all of the conscious calls to challenge its own history and purpose, however, these documents provide very little substance in terms of how to actually disrupt and replace those structures with something different.

Above, Matias expresses his doubt that the “transition” towards multicultural education can ever truly be achieved within the current structures of Chilean society due to the way it has shaped the curriculum of its schools. He touches on the idea of the “imaginary identity:” the type of citizen that the Chilean school has long been meant to form, but one that is complicated by the lack of any substantive definition of what it means to “be Chilean,” besides the arbitrary constraints placed upon it during the military dictatorship. Several other interviewees also discussed the notion of the imaginary Chilean identity, its roots and effects, and how it has served to “other” immigrants by defining them in opposition to what “the Chilean” supposedly is:

“We’ve never had the opportunity to define who we are. The military dictatorship decided the norms for how we relate to each other; they imposed a curfew, they changed the constitution, they established the national flower, the “*cueca*” as the national dance, the “*guasó*” as the traditional [Chilean]...With time, this would become how we would define our own nationality. But the “*guasó*” is just a character, it’s imaginary, it doesn’t exist.

The dictatorship also generated a fear of the foreigner. This fear discourse was aligned over all the media channels, telling us that to ‘be Chilean’ was to be the good guy. It was aligned in schools; the school became an institution for forming Chilean nationality. It became a factory to produce good Chileans.” –*Javier and Vicente, school psychologists*

“Chileans feel threatened by immigrants...they represent a nightmare to our colonial “origin” that created really segregated classes. The foreigner is a threat, not a contribution, so the Chilean tries to keep them out.” –*Javier and Vicente, school psychologists*

“...I think it’s also complicated because we have to define what it means to ‘be Chilean.’ From what I can tell, ‘the Chilean’ doesn’t have his own identity either...As a country, we don’t feel like part of South America, we don’t feel indigenous, we reject where we came from, we don’t acknowledge that we’re all from the same earth, and that humans created

borders; they aren't natural, geographic boundaries are political boundaries." –*Diego, history teacher*

"We reject our own people...we deny our indigenous roots. When we talk about "black Chileans," we're immediately talking about Haitians or Peruvians. There's discrimination everywhere." –*Francisco, school psychologist*

These comments suggest a connection between the struggle for "Chilean identity" and the "othering" of and discrimination against immigrants. From Chile's colonial moment of "rejecting its indigenous roots" and immediately seeking to whiten its population, a process of alienating and villainizing the darker "other" began. This can be interpreted as an attempt to find security in an imaginary Chilean identity that can never be fully grasped. Whether or not the majority of the Chilean population is consciously aware of this struggle for identity and need to distinguish the Chilean from the "other" by means of geographic boundaries or social prejudices, evidence of this discrimination in Chile is still strong today:

"People say that Chile is a 'diverse, multicultural' country...and those same people think that a black person is an animal. They see no problem with Argentinians, North Americans, Asians; they see them as 'tourists,' here for business...but when they talk about those 6 countries [of Latin America,] they talk about poverty, theft, drug trafficking, prostitution...discrimination in Chile is still strong. Our ancestors sought Europeans to whiten the country, whereas the black person represents darkness, dirtiness...we've internalized this." –*Francisco, school psychologist*

"There's discrimination between who is more black, less black, more white, less white." –*Matias, school psychologist*

"When I came here, they discriminated against me...because I talked differently, I talked like an Inca." –*young boy from Peru, speaking with Matias and myself*

"If you're blonde, with blue or green eyes, and you come from Europe or North America...welcome! Chilean upper- and middle-class families will welcome you warmly. If you're brown, short, with indigenous roots, or African-American, there's a distance...you see this manifest in the community, in their location in the city. Upper- and middle-class Chileans will only welcome lower- or lower middle-class immigrants if they come as nannies, or house cleaners." –*Joaquin, history teacher*

The “white Chilean” versus “dark other” dichotomy echoes Tijoux’s work on attitudes between Chileans and immigrants in Chile (2014), and the “good” versus “bad” kinds of immigrants parallel public opinion and President Piñera’s stance on border restrictions and deportation. These quotes provide further evidence of particular discrimination against the new wave of immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries, and reinforce the importance of recognizing and disrupting the implicit and explicit ways schools might allow or encourage discrimination against immigrant students.

The MINEDUC documents I read all explicitly emphasize the state’s commitment to non-discrimination and inclusivity. They encourage schools to expand their narrow categorizations of immigrant students, moving beyond just their academic performance to consider their social experience, family history, and cultural background (“Program for Scholastic Integration,” 2009; “Technical guidelines for the PIE,” 2013; “Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016). However, the nature of the MINEDUC’s most prominent initiative to address migrant students’ unique needs may actually serve as a mechanism for “otherization,” whether or not it is intended to. By labeling migrant students as having a “transitory special educational need,” they might cause teachers to view those students as inferior or perhaps as being more challenging to work with or requiring too much extra effort on the part of typical and differential educators. This could potentially increase hostility or disregard towards immigrant children or decrease teachers’ willingness to fully engage with them. If a teacher categorizes a Haitian student’s inability to speak Spanish as a “disability,” for example, they might subconsciously act in a condescending or resentful manner towards that student, and this behavior might reproduce the hierarchies already in place, in which immigrant students are already below “native Chileans” in terms of academic and social status and mobility.

Effects of neoliberalism on immigrant student experience

The last systemic tension I find necessary to address is that the Chilean education system is deeply ingrained within the country's maintenance of neoliberalism. Joaquin, a history teacher, describes the way that schools are extremely segregated by class (and by extension, nationality, since the immigrants coming from neighboring Latin American countries are the ones in more vulnerable economic situations), despite the country's efforts to provide equal access through a voucher system. He describes the long-lasting effects of neoliberalism in terms of the kinds of socioeconomic mobility it offers the immigrants who can afford to go to private schools and denies that same future mobility to those who can only go to public schools:

“The lower and lower-middle classes in Chile [send their children] to public schools...The immigrant students in our public schools are the ones in the most vulnerable situations. Immigrants from the upper class, those who are businessmen or entrepreneurs, they don't look for public schools, they go to the elite private schools. The private schools are on par with those in the United States. For the immigrants from vulnerable classes, their only option is public school. They have low expectations, visions for the future, few of them have big dreams...those who can go to private schools have the entire world [open to them]. We need to teach this to all Chileans, but our economic system makes it difficult to teach everyone equally. The education system is organized to operate like a business.”

It is important to recognize the effects and limits of neoliberalism when envisioning a multicultural education that might truly provide equality and equity for all students. The system at present poses a significant obstacle for immigrants of lower- and lower-middle classes in receiving and taking advantage of the same opportunities upper-class Chileans and “white” immigrants will already be guaranteed.

Practical gaps and challenges

Most of my interviewees expressed frustration at how ineffective implementation procedures for MINEDUC policies and proposals have been in their schools, even though there

are theoretically progressive ideas and guidelines being produced on a national scale. Several common themes emerged in terms of the practical mechanisms for preparation, implementation, and follow-up of multicultural education that tended to be insufficient or completely absent. These included: inadequate professional preparation in the context of a multicultural classroom, lack of detailed protocol for how to implement these concepts, absence of assessment measures and personnel, and little to no time allocated to staff working collaboratively on issues of diversity and immigrant inclusion.

Lack of adequate teacher preparation

Many teachers attributed the general lack of preparedness to effectively integrate and include immigrant students to their own teacher training, which they say did not address the issue of multiculturalism in any depth:

Me: “Is there any special training for teachers on how to address this topic?”

Camila (first grade teacher): “As far as I know, no. But I did my thesis on Bilingual Intercultural Education, on how we address the topics of indigenous peoples and what students from other cultures bring to our schools, and I realized that we are still missing a lot in terms of teacher preparation. Sometimes teachers don’t address the issue because they don’t know how to, and others because they just aren’t interested...But this is an important moment, and I think we’ve realized the gaps we have, that continue to grow bigger...I try to teach this in the most effective way I can, but there’s no guideline to tell us how to work on this.”

Camila has had the unique experience of studying the issue of intercultural education in-depth, and has used it as a comparative framework to approach her own teaching in a multicultural context. She recognizes that while there is some teacher preparation and public discussion on the topic of how to integrate indigenous peoples’ histories and cultures into the Chilean curriculum, there is no equivalent of that preparation and discussion regarding multicultural education, even though Chilean classrooms have become increasingly culturally diverse. Even Camila, who has special preparation in addressing issues of diversity in the

classroom, admits she has a hard time incorporating any kind of multicultural education because she has no groundwork or guidelines to rely on or learn from.

Another teacher, Diego, describes his own university experience to me and acknowledges that it lacked any units on multicultural education, expressing frustration that there are few options for current teachers to continue shaping their pedagogical practices and learn strategies relevant to the new social and cultural reality of the country. He explains how teacher preparation programs are designed to form teachers that can only deliver a homogenous curriculum to a homogenous “Chilean” population:

“It’s been a challenge in pedagogical terms because we aren’t trained to teach classes made up of such diverse children. We’re only trained to teach classes made up of one type of child... We need to establish adequate spaces to continue teacher preparation. Teachers need to be able to have the space and time to keep learning. The last moral, ethical reserve are the teachers.”

Thus, even in an ideal world where the government were to publish highly progressive visions and provide enough detail and resources to effectively carry them out, teachers cannot effectively transform their teaching strategies to something resembling culturally responsive pedagogy if they have not been adequately prepared to do so. This becomes even more difficult considering that the education system of the country has historically encouraged the homogeneity of the curriculum as well as the student population.

Lack of concrete implementation protocol and evaluation

Many teachers I interviewed claimed they lacked resources; they felt like the government had not provided enough concrete information and support throughout the implementation stage. Even in MINEDUC documents, the responsibility is clearly placed on individual schools to take up this change within their own communities, and all of the ideas for how to implement PIE and other initiatives lack any declaration of commitment that the government will play a role in

helping implement or follow up on how effective these initiatives are. School professionals voiced their frustrations about the generality and vagueness of MINEDUC protocol, expressing their need for concrete pedagogical tools to help them turn the visionary governmental concepts into reality:

“The ministry’s primary concern is in making sure immigrants have access to education; there’s no program being developed to address the coexistence within those schools. There’s the protocol saying that schools have to receive immigrants, make sure they have good conditions, not discriminate against them, treat them with respect, give them equal opportunities to grow like the rest of their classmates, but there’s no program that’s able to fund and support all this. There is still nothing concrete, no resources, no time, no materials for our staff; we’re still missing all of that. There is a lot of talk, but little practice.” –*Sebastian, school social worker*

“We need an inclusive effort on the state level. The government doesn’t teach you how to do what you need to do. Everything has a protocol, but you can understand a protocol however you want.” –*Francisco, school psychologist*

“It’s a general protocol...there’s no protocol that says, ‘the school has to do ‘x’ when there’s a situation of intolerance or discrimination against an immigrant...’, there are no specific strategies to deal with things like offensive words, things that have to do with the coexistence of the school.” –*Sebastian, school social worker*

In “Discrimination in the school space” (2013), the MINEDUC provides an example chart of common offensive terms, an explanation of why they are offensive, and suggestions for non-offensive terms to use instead. For example, the term “*indio*” (“Indian”) is a “pejorative or offensive term that promotes discrimination,” and should be replaced with “*indígena*” (“indigenous”), the “correct term of inclusive language” (47). In this way, the MINEDUC hopes to provide some concrete suggestions for how teachers can become aware of the language they use daily, make changes to their own vocabulary, and then encourage their students to do the same. While this is a laudable effort and certainly a necessary step in recognizing discriminatory practices, especially those that may be subtle yet commonplace, this seems to be the extent of the government’s concrete suggestions for how to disrupt and eradicate discriminatory behavior. As

evidenced by Sebastian's last comment, there is a need for resources and protocols that go much further beyond this basic level provided in the MINEDUC documents.

Beyond simply hearing about these frustrating gaps from my interviewees, I was able to experience a striking example of the gap between theory and practice during my participant-observations in Santiago. One of the schools I was researching in held its annual "Día de la convivencia escolar," or "Day of school coexistence." The *encargado de convivencia escolar*, or the staff member who was in charge of maintaining a positive school culture and dealing with diversity issues "of any kind", gave me a copy of the objectives and schedule for the day. It stated that the school would be using "recreational activities and activities of reflection" in order to focus on intercultural exchange, provide an opportunity for students to share their unique stories, experiences, hopes and challenges for the future. However, what I observed during that day decidedly did not align with those stated objectives.

The children all gathered in the gym to watch a twenty-minute video depicting a young boy who is bullied by his peers to the point of attempting suicide. Following this video, the *encargado* gave a short speech about how traumatic bullying can be and how it should not be tolerated in the school. Immediately afterwards, he put on "Despacito" by Luis Fonsi, the hit song of the year, and the children got up, danced, sang, ran around, and played with hula hoops and soccer balls.

Attempting to process this abrupt transition, I noticed a young boy crying on the floor by the stairs. Since no other adults were around at the time, I sat down next to him and asked if he was okay. He kept crying and his friends came over, telling me that he was crying because he was often bullied at school and the video must have reminded him of his own experience. They said to him, "Come on, come on, it's not time for crying anymore, it's time to celebrate and have

fun!” Eventually, the *encargado* came over, entirely shocked that the child would have such a reaction to the video they were just shown, and took the child to his office to calm him down.

For me, this day was a concrete representation of the gaps between theory and practice in terms of addressing multicultural education or any other kind of inclusive pedagogical strategies. The outline of the day had clear, achievable goals that aligned with visions of a school as a progressive, inclusive space to share stories, see oneself represented in the activities and materials, and learn from one another with respect and commitment to non-discrimination. Given how differently the reality of the day turned out, it is clear that these visions are not being translated, at least in some schools, into effective practice. Furthermore, I asked the *encargado* if they had any measures of assessment in place to see if and how the students actually learned the objectives that were set out for the day. He told me that there was no formal evaluation in place, besides simply conversing with the children and hearing what they thought of the day.

In the same school, I had a conversation during recess with the group of second graders, two of which I quoted at the very beginning of my introduction. I asked them what they thought their school could do to improve intercultural understanding and respect for each other. The Paraguayan and Venezuelan girls said they would like to have a classroom or school wide workshop that discusses discrimination and that “everyone is a human being.” I asked them if they wished they had more opportunities to tell their own or their families’ stories and hear others’, and they agreed: “We’re still missing that.” This demonstrates a clear gap between the initiatives students believe would improve understanding and respect, the initiatives the ministry and school administration outline in terms of how to achieve this understanding, and the failure to successfully implement and assess this in the very same school.

The lack of resources and protocols designed to help design, aid the execution of, and evaluate the effectiveness of activities like the girls suggested indicates that there is likely a wide range of how schools address the issues of inclusion and diversity, and that those realities might differ greatly from how the MINEDUC envisioned their initiatives and ideals to be implemented. As the school psychologist team Javier and Vicente told me, “You don’t see the official visions being put into practice.”

Lack of structured time to collaborate

The last challenge that was frequently identified by educators and psychologists, and one that is a clear gap from the idealistic visions stated in MINEDUC documents (“Guidelines for building inclusive educational communities,” 2016) was the lack of time and space to discuss the issue of multicultural education with their colleagues. “Any conversations we do have are solely about the theoretical, and not the practical. We do not consider elements outside of the daily curriculum. We do not discuss strategies for coping with problems that might arise from these conditions,” said one teacher. Others described having to talk informally about these issues in small groups of teachers who shared the same schedule or taught the same grades, because there was no mandated meeting time allocated for all staff members to share their thoughts and concerns.

Only one professional responded positively to my question about whether there was space within the school to discuss issues of immigrant inclusion and multicultural education. Valentina, a psychologist, told me that the new administration of her school was very welcoming to the ideas and concerns of its professionals: “The principal considers and supports our projects and strategies, we can share pedagogical practices, exchange opinions, talk about our different

realities; we have extra days at the end of the semester where the staff can reflect on all of that. It's quite free and peaceful work here.”

Valentina further attributed this success to the commitment of her school's teachers, particularly in the context of a homogenous national curriculum:

“In terms of pedagogy, the state needs to make a difference. The curricular adaptations depend entirely on the willingness of the teachers. In this school, we definitely have the willingness, we want to work on it. We always have television channels, UNICEF, journalists interviewing us, because they realize that this school is unique, there's a constant effort to teach multicultural pedagogy, that's kind of what this school is characterized by.”

Thus, it does seem that at least one school has found a way to promote and commit to multicultural initiatives, as well as to evaluate, whether informally or formally, the approaches they are taking to implement diversity initiatives and how their students are feeling and performing in class. By creating the space to incorporate the opinions and experiences of its professionals, it has generated its own reputation as an example of how multicultural education can be addressed in schools with majority immigrant student populations.

In general, however, it appears that the MINEDUC proposals that have been passed down to schools do not possess the universal structure or available resources to address the nuanced issue of multiculturalism outside of the most basic levels, which can (and according to the MINEDUC, should) be implemented without radical changes to their educational practices and overall school organization.

Conclusion

As defined at the very beginning, multicultural education aims to create equal opportunities for students across complex and intersectional categories of social identity. However, I believe that multicultural education has the potential to go beyond “equity.” I believe

it has the potential to re-imagine what the Chilean “citizen” and the “other” are; perhaps re-defining these arbitrary statuses in a way that reflects their shared humanity and celebrates their differences as valuable elements of Chilean society, or perhaps finding a feasible way to eliminate this dichotomy altogether. I believe multicultural education has the power to restructure what kinds of values, rights, and responsibilities children of all backgrounds learn, as well as how they learn to interpret and actualize what it might mean to be “Chilean,” or any other nationality or combination of nationalities. Some of my interviewees’ visions for the future alluded to a type of “transformative” education that might have the power to go beyond what the MINEDUC has posited thus far, potentially reaching an intersectional, socially conscious, and justice-oriented level aligned with critical theorists such as Freire, Banks, Ladson-Billings, Montecinos, and others. “I hope we can understand the multidimensionality of migration,” Sebastian, the social worker, told me. Camila, the first grade teacher, was determined to push for education in which “we construct new knowledge from what each student brings to the classroom.”

Finally, I would like to end with a quote from Joaquin, one of the history teachers I interviewed:

“Education means: from the beginning, teaching children to make the most of the diversity here, that the teacher and the family play a key role in teaching them to share, to live well together, to see richness in diversity, understand differences, improve the negative, elevate the positive— there’s no magic solution.”

As with any attempt to grapple with with the complexity, intersectionality, and uniqueness of the human condition across socially and politically constructed borders, there is no “magic solution” to the issue of multicultural education in Chile. However, I do hope that this project might serve as an example of how we might begin to weave together policy and practice,

think critically about the approaches and gaps that persist in our realities, and honor the lived experiences of all those who are in the process of navigating the multiplicity of being.

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