



*Special Issue: Education and the Production of Inequalities:  
Perspectives from the Global South and North*

# Migrant children in a Chilean school: Habitus, discourses and otherness

Journal of Sociology

2022, Vol. 58(3) 342–358

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DOI: 10.1177/14407833211071144

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## Abstract

Drawing on data from ethnographic fieldwork in a diverse school located in the north of Chile, this article explores the ways of narrating and producing otherness, through the analysis of school staff discourses. The article identifies and describes how the discourses on migrant children are produced in a school context, and the sources and references used by teachers. Utilising a focused ethnographic method and based on a critical realist and Bourdieusian approach, this article argues that there are surrounding discourses and pre-existing sets of social relations (state–school relations, socio-spatial relations, intergenerational relations), which are reflexively integrated into the habitus of teachers and the institutional habitus of the school, in order to understand the conviviality with migrant children and to produce social differences.

## Keywords

critical realism, diversity, habitus, migrant children, otherness

Even though population movements have been part of Chile's history since its colonial period (Tijoux & Palominos, 2015), the transformations of current migratory processes<sup>1</sup> have gained a preponderant space in academic and media discourses (Browne & Baessolo, 2010; Valenzuela-Vergara, 2019). Several international studies (Eberl et al., 2018; Retis, 2008; Sola-Morales & Zurbano-Berenguer, 2019) assert that migration is

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considered a social problem, and in Chile the trend is similar. Specifically, migration has become the political scapegoat used to explain the shortcomings of the neoliberal system that has 'privatised various public life spheres' in Chile (Ruiz & Boccardo, 2020).

Furthermore, the current South–South migration and the consequent racialisation of Latin American migrants have explicitly evidenced the different ways in which the Chilean population and institutions, such as schools, receive regional migration and European migration (Webb & Alvarez, 2018). The production of social hierarchies concerning the countries of origin has deep roots in building social imaginaries in Chile, in which the early 20th century's European migration was associated with economic progress (Stefoni & Stang, 2017) and industrial development (Cano & Soffia, 2009). Although Chile may be considered a country with a *mestizo* population and identity, given the *encounter* of European colonisation with indigenous native people, Chileans seem not to recognise *mestizaje* (mixed heritage) as a founding element of the country (Tijoux, 2013).

The production and deployment of classifications and social hierarchies generate distinctions in the population and separate 'us' from 'otherness' (Anderson, 2013), those who are considered different and those who do not belong culturally and socially to Chile. These differentiations and *inferiorising* practices (Walsh, 2009) are part of the daily life of migrants in Chile, mediating their relationships and their inclusion processes in the host country. These practices of subordination and othering may shape the everyday experiences of migrant adults and those of children of diverse origins who arrive in Chile.

To examine how migrant childhood is understood and received in Chile, it is key to study schools, as spaces in which daily interactions with peer cultures (Pinson et al., 2010) are generated and the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion are experienced. On the one hand, the educational field emerges as a crucial realm for grasping how hierarchies and broader social inequalities are reproduced, perpetuated and reinforced. On the other hand, schools are a central site to observe intergenerational relations between children and adults, since schools are spaces in which adults intervene directly and influence children's lives. Likewise, schools may function as essential spaces in the socialisation processes of childhood (Tijoux & Zapata-Sepúlveda, 2019), and where the discourses of teachers and school staff might shape the experiences and subjectivities of migrant children.

Drawing on data from my ethnographic fieldwork with Chilean teachers and school staff in a school located in the north of Chile, the purposes of this article are twofold. First, it aims to identify and describe what are the discourses on migrant children in a 'diverse school', and the sources and references that school staff use to understand the conviviality with migrant children. Second, it seeks to describe how otherness is produced institutionally and discursively, and to comprehend how othering process are mediated and shaped by habitus.

Utilising a focused ethnographic method and based on a critical realist and Bourdieusian approach, the article argues that there are surrounding discourses and pre-existing sets of social relations (state–school relations, socio-spatial relations, intergenerational relations), which are reflexively integrated into the habitus of teachers to understand and produce otherness. By examining the ways in which teachers understand

and experience the conviviality with migrant children, I seek to grasp how different narratives on migrant children are mobilised through the reflexivity of habitus. In this regard, the teachers' habitus and the school's institutional habitus allow me to investigate the production and narration of migrant otherness. Theorising from critical realism enables me to define how the set of social relationships at a macro level intersect with the *materialities* of the local experience in school, and how it permeates the institutional habitus.

## The school system and educational policies

The study of schools in Chile necessitates observing the inequities of the educational system and the 'monocultural' character of its curriculum (Quintriqueo Millan & McGinity Travers, 2009). This has its origin in the implementation of neoliberal reforms during Pinochet's military dictatorship (1973–90) in Chile, which have permeated all social fields and have generated deep inequalities. For instance, the educational field has been recognised as a laboratory for neoliberal projects (Inzunza et al., 2019) and has distinguished itself with regard to being highly segregated and privatised (Valenzuela et al., 2014). The monocultural and homogenising dimensions of the educational curriculum tend to delegitimise ethnic differences in educational settings, and may suppress the possibility of school practices other than those associated with the dominant Chilean identity (Quintriqueo Millan & McGinity Travers, 2009). According to a Bourdieusian approach, schools transmit to children the dominant culture's precepts and contribute to the reproduction of broader social structures and hierarchies (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000).

Concerning the policies involved in the education of migrant children, it is important to mention two current policies that seem to abandon, in theory, the segregated and monocultural approaches that have characterised the Chilean educational system. Notably, the Law of School Inclusion (*Ley de inclusión escolar*) understands education as a social right and establishes the end of school selection processes, eliminating co-payment for families. In that sense, this law seeks to eradicate exclusion and discrimination, and promote conviviality among diverse students who have 'different socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, gender, nationality or religion conditions' (Mineduc, 2015, p. 1). Likewise, this regulation promotes and respects 'the cultural, religious and social diversity of families' (Mineduc, 2015, p. 1). On the other hand, the National Policy on Foreign Students (*Política Nacional de Estudiantes Extranjeros*), launched in 2018, is a key normative document in relation to education and migrant children and it considers, in theory, the context of educational segregation, and acknowledges the necessity of creating intercultural schools (Mineduc, 2018). The policy approach seeks pedagogical practices that recognise and value diversity without hierarchies or discrimination. In this sense, it indicates that through interculturality, the creation of new forms of conviviality can be promoted regardless of the nationality or background of students.

Consequently, these policies rely on the principles of educational inclusion and highlight cultural diversity. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand how schools interpret these policies and how they are translated into daily practices. These forms of reinvention of policies can be framed from the theory of policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012). This perspective suggests enactment as a discursive process that is 'contextually mediated

and institutionally rendered' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). Therefore, within schools, the policies and the 'institutional histories and commitments' interact (Ball et al., 2012, p. 7), or, echoing the interpretation of Falabella (2020, p. 28), the enactment process brings into play 'policy discourse, teachers' subjectivities and daily practices, and social-cultural school intake'.

## **A critical realist approach to habitus**

Bourdieu (1990, 2007) defines habitus as a set of durable dispositions that operate as structuring structures and generate organising principles of practices, thoughts, and feelings. Using the notion of habitus enables grasping acquired patterns of meaning and how this relates to the teacher's production of otherness. This system of structuring dispositions and generators of practices and perceptions has been created along the subject's social trajectories (Martínez García, 2017). So, habitus as a toolkit helps in studying the school as a social field in which social relations occur and where habitus can embody these social practices and meanings.

In the educational field, habitus can be approached in relation to the concept of institutional habitus (Byrd, 2019; Ingram, 2009; Reay, 1998). The institutional habitus applied to educational settings can be understood as the intertwining of the school ethos with individuals' actions in schools (Reay, 1998). According to the conceptualisation of Diane Reay, systematised by Atkinson (2011), institutional habitus is conceived as a complex mixture of the school curriculum, pedagogical practices, teachers' expectations and biases, and students' educational practices. Similarly, Reay et al. (2001) explain that institutional habitus draws on elements such as curriculum, organisational practices, and organisation culture. They argue that the various components of the institutional habitus will have a different weight when *enacted* in the daily practices of the school. Hence the conceptualisation of the institutional habitus may be linked to the enactment processes outlined in the previous section, in which the ways policies and discourses are translated into action will be mediated by reflective processes of the institutional and subjective habitus of teachers. As Ingram (2009) argues, the agents (pupils and staff) will structure the institutional habitus. Nevertheless, habitus as devised by Bourdieu is usually understood as an inflexible scheme of beliefs and behaviours (Azaola, 2012). In other words, habitus may lose its dynamic capacity of mediating social relations when a deterministic view absorbs it. Responding to these limitations of the concept, I tried to enrich it by adding Archer's analytic dualism as a framework to enlarge the scope and possibilities of habitus.

On the one hand, Aguilar (2008, p. 18) points out that habitus could be conceived as a mechanism that explains the social world, and social agents reproduce social structures through practices and discourses which feed the habitus. On the other hand, critical realism theory recognises the structural relations in which 'intersubjective meanings' are situated and argues that subjects can 'transform or reproduce the existing structures' (Decoteau, 2017, p. 59). According to Archer's analytic dualism (1998), structures are reproduced or transformed from social relations. Therefore, reality will have an open and multidimensional character in which individuals offer reflexive actions in their relationships with others (Hernández-Romero,

2017). The reflective nature of the actions implies that the agents operate in the social world based on a 'reflexive selectivity'. The subjects define strategies (Caetano, 2011, p. 158) that respond to the influence of the structures. Hence, there are pre-existing sets of social relations which are elaborated and transformed as they interact.

For Aguilar (2017), there are elements of agreement between Archer and Bourdieu that may align the habitus with a satisfactory analytic dualism theory. Aguilar (2008) argues that for the authors who write from a critical realist position, the structure is a system of social relations between social positions that could coincide with Bourdieu's theory, as both are anchored on a relational vision of reality. According to Aedo (2014), Archer's reflexive process can be coherently linked with Bourdieu's theory of practice. The relational view of Archer's subject has reflexivity because the actors have the capacity to understand themselves concerning their social contexts (Donati & Archer, 2015). Thus, Margaret Archer's theory and the Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical positions could converge in the contextual and historical generation of subjectivities (Aedo, 2014). Similar to Aguilar, Decoteau re-read Bourdieu's theory from some of the tenets of critical realism, providing 'insights into how the habitus is capable of reflexivity and social change' (2016, p. 303). She suggests a 'renovated version of Bourdieu's habitus' (2016, p. 304). Decoteau explains that the habitus is given by forged and contingent experiences, namely, some structural and others that are transformed according to the different social fields in which the subjects are positioning themselves.

On the one hand, I propose a critical realist approach to habitus to grasp how teachers reflexively deploy the set of organisational dispositions of practices and thoughts. On the other hand, critical realism helps to identify how the social reality constituted by broader social relations is incorporated in the teachers' discourses to reference, narrate and produce social differences at Chilean schools. Finally, the habitus will be produced in dialogue with the subjects' concrete experiences in specific fields, the social heritages and the macrostructures built and deployed around broad social relations.

### **Conviviality at school: childhood and generational relations**

Following the relational vision of reality previously described in Bourdieu and Archer's theoretical entanglement, in this article I argue that 'generational relations' (Alanen, 2001) acquire a crucial role in examining how teachers narrate their experiences of conviviality with migrant children. In addition, these relations will mediate and shape the school staff's discourses, expectations, and practices on childhood and migration. Conviviality, then, is a key concept and, as Neal et al. (2013, p. 310) suggest, it allows for an understanding of the processes of 'social interactions and negotiations in intensely multicultural environments'. In this article, I will show how certain categories of childhood and youth which are taken for granted are reproduced or negotiated in teachers' discourses. The 'generational relations' (Alanen, 2001) may help to identify how childhood is positioned around the adult-centred order. In this sense, the othering of migrant children in school would involve two main dimensions: childhood and origin or cultural background. In short, children are positioned in a double otherness.

Following Bessant et al. (2020, p. 79), from Bourdiesian theory, ‘concepts like “youth” are not pre-made ‘natural’ objects: they are always part of classificatory struggles’ occurring in diverse fields, such as the educational settings of my research site. Bourdieu’s toolkit captures nuances of social life’s *materialities* and relations, and serves to grasp childhood as a heterogeneous and less essentialist concept. Therefore, the relational view of childhood implies attending to it in relation to institutions, social policies, media discourses, and adults’ narratives, among others (Mayall, 2002; Vergara Del Solar, 2015).

## The study

This article is based on 26 semi-structured interviews and several informal conversations with the school staff of a primary school located in the north of Chile. This article is drawn from an early analysis of a dataset from a larger ethnographic research project which explores how the social positions of otherness during contemporary migration are being created, narrated, negotiated and challenged by migrant and non-migrant students, and school staff.

I conducted a focused ethnography during the second academic semester in Chile (July to December), for six months in 2019. Within ethnographical approaches, focused ethnography arises as a redefinition of short-term ethnography conceptualised and developed by the sociologist Knoblauch (2005). Following Higginbottom and Cruz (2013), focused ethnography enables researchers to understand the interrelationship between people and their settings in a shorter period than traditional ethnographic immersions because the production of data is intensive and focused on specific experiences at the research site.

During my fieldwork, I attended school daily from 8 am to 3 pm approximately. The first phase of the ethnography consisted mainly of observations and informal conversations; the second phase included conducting interviews with the school staff (teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, and other members of the administrative staff) and children. The first weeks after my arrival at the setting, I spent time observing three different classes and conducting observations of students in the playground, the refectory and the school entrance, among other spaces. Then, during the last months of my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with the school staff. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour and 40 minutes.

As my research advanced, my methodological strategies and decisions took new and different directions. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 4) point out, in ethnographies, ‘sampling strategies will have to be worked out, and changed, as the research progresses’. In this sense, after the school community learned about my research aims and agreed and consented to participate in it, I developed a close relationship with three teachers who became the first interviewees in my ethnography. Then, the inclusion of other potential participants depended on their engagement with my study and their roles in the school. Specifically, I decided to interview teachers who shared with migrant students in their classrooms and members of the school staff who had key functions in the school such as the school headteacher,

the behavioural leader, and the teacher in charge of the Conviviality Department, among others.

All the interviews were carried out face to face at the school under study, and the times and schedules were agreed in relation to the availability of the teachers. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and digitally recorded. In addition, the interviews had a conversational tone, were designed as semi-structured and covered a range of topics such as general educational experiences and career paths, experiences educating migrant children, ways of understanding and valuing migrant children and adults in Chile, among others.

This ethnographic study was carried out in a school in Iquique, a city of the north of Chile, the capital of the region with the highest proportion of migrants in relation to Chilean population and located in a region that shares a border with Bolivia. I made a choice to conduct a school ethnography in the north of Chile for two main reasons: because of the specificities of the territory being situated in a border area, and because the region has the highest proportion of migrants in relation to the population born in Chile.

The north of Chile is a territory with contradictory meanings and socio-spatial relations that are interesting to take into account. The zone that includes the Region of Arica and Parinacota, the Region of Tarapacá and the Region of Antofagasta was annexed to Chile after the 'Guerra del Pacífico' (War of the Pacific) (1879–83). This war was triggered because of territorial conflicts between Bolivia, Peru and Chile, ending with the incorporation of new territories into Chile. This territorial annexation generated a series of state intervention processes called *Chileanisation* (Mondaca et al., 2018). The local population became foreigners and was later ascribed to the Chilean nation (Tijoux, 2013) through an acculturation process fostered by Chilean public education. Consequently, international politics assumes this area of northern Chile is controversial due to its changing configurations of the idea of 'national community' and its border character in which there are intense movements of people. Therefore, this diverse context in which contradictory notions about national belonging play out along with what Anderson (2006) coined as 'imagined communities', enriched my observation and analysis of the interrelation of social positions and discourses on otherness.

The data presented in this article was systematised through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to organise the discourses. Then, the interviews were analysed through Critical Discourse Analysis, using some insights from Norman Fairclough's work.

## **Discourses on migrant children and conviviality with 'otherness'**

### *Conceptualising diversity*

This section presents some of the predominant discourses of school staff on migrant children, focusing on two overarching dimensions: the conceptualisation of diversity and the narratives of differences. In addition, I will describe some of the recurring sources and references that the school staff usually use to mobilise broader meanings around the conviviality with, and among, children of diverse origins. These, in short, try to give an

account of how the habitus of the school staff is shaped and influenced by the surrounding discourses on migration and by a set of pre-existing relations such as state–school relations and socio-spatial relations.

Is the school under study considered diverse? What are the elements that teachers mobilise to define it? What role does the diversity of origins of the students play in the meanings around the school? In many interviews, ideas about diversity emerged associated with the school's educational project that defines it as such, and also due to the diversity of nationalities of its students. However, this notion of diversity was reinterpreted and contested by some members of the school staff. Thus, these narratives allow for a linking of the conceptualisation of diversity to the school's ethos enacted in its institutional habitus. These examples give an account of the dimensions in which understandings of diversity materialise in the educational setting and echo the analysis of Berg and Sigona (2013, p. 350), who identified three interrelated dimensions of diversity, namely, diversity as part of a narrative that celebrates it; diversity as a social fact that refers to a population with multiple ethnicities; and diversity as a policy that seeks to promote social integration.

On the question of whether they considered the school under study as a diverse school, the vast majority of the members of the school staff asserted that they did consider it to be so and they usually celebrated this. In this sense, the idea of diversity was conceptualised as a result of the variety of students enrolled in the school, as the teachers indicated that the school welcomed students with different learning capacities, with different economic conditions and of different nationalities. This way of understanding diversity is illustrated by Ramiro, a primary teacher:

This school has diversity because we have children with different socioeconomic power. If we talk about children and intellectual capacity, we have children with special educational needs, that is, with different diagnoses. We have children from different countries, different ethnicities.

To explain the scope of diversity, teachers tended to refer to everyday experiences, relations, and the physical and social environment within the school. The school's educational project, and the policies on school inclusion and the education of migrant students were not a crucial part of their repertoire used to reference diversity. Following the realistic critical approach to habitus that structures the theoretical argument of this article, it seems that the everyday social relations nourish and shape the habitus of school staff to a greater extent than state–school relations. This conclusion could be reached because I was able to identify that the teachers mentioned diversity and social differences by referring to local school practices that seemed to be promoted by particular school initiatives and not fostered by national inclusion policies.

However, members of the administrative staff and personnel with key roles in the school, such as the teacher in charge of the school conviviality department, psychologists and the headteacher, typically embraced the school's inclusive values and enacted the guidelines of educational policies in their narratives. In this way, they use pre-existing state–school relations and policies as sources and translate and enact them in their narratives. The personnel with key roles in the school made explicit reference to the institutional procedures that promoted the inclusion of the school's diverse pupils, thus



embedding the institutional habitus in their discourses. For instance, Vicente, Behavioural Leader, indicated, in a conversation in which we spoke specifically of the diversity of students of different origins, that for him, 'the school has the mission of receiving all the students who want to enrol, without distinction'. This statement is aligned with the discourse of Humberto, a teacher with a key role in pedagogical practices at the school, who asserted that:

the Ministry of Education and the municipality aim for public schools to be increasingly diverse and that no one is excluded [...] this school has always fulfilled those rules [...] we are a school that wants to accomplish the Ministry of Education guidelines, we are happy receiving these students.

Although neither Vicente nor Humberto explicitly mentioned the Law of School Inclusion or the National Policy on Foreign Students, they did highlight the general tenets of the Ministry of Education regulations that seek to eliminate exclusions and promote diverse schools. In particular, the diversity of students in terms of country of origin is discursively celebrated by teachers. This kind of diversity precisely reflects the role of the school as a place of encounters for children from different backgrounds and allows teachers to take pride in the assumed inclusive practices of the school where they work. Consequently, the institutional habitus of the school may be nurtured by policies that seek inclusion. Then, some members of the administrative staff who show a more direct engagement with institutional practices and educational policies use sources of institutional habitus on which to base their narratives towards diversity.

### **Mestizaje and the stratification of differences**

Although there is an evident positive recognition of diversity in relation to the origins of the students, this diversity is stratified and observed in an oppositional way when compared to Chilean students. As mentioned in the introduction to this article, it is possible to assert that there is a denial of the Chilean *mestizo* identity, thus, the arrival of migrant students makes social imaginaries explicit. For example, Marianela, teacher in charge of assisting students with disabilities, stated:

I think that the identity of the Iquiqueños is being lost with the arrival of the migrants, because we already mix. Now there are *mestizos*, I don't know. Chileans marry Colombians, they have families, foreign children arrive here. Well, they begin to arrive little by little and we do not even notice when we are filled.

The case of Marianela, in which she does not consider in her discourse the colonial heritage that Latin America shares, nor the intercultural mixture since colonial times, can be connected with the interpretation of Ulises, a mathematics teacher, who indicates that the arrival of migrant families is part of the current daily life in Chile, and that, in his words, 'we have already accepted that Chileans are more *mestizo*'.

Notably, the discourses about migrant children developed by the members of the school staff participating in my study tend to focus on the differences between Chilean

children and migrant children. In other words, the way teachers narrate conviviality with migrant children tends to be outlined in contrast to Chilean children, making an explicit distinction between the notion of ‘them’, as otherness, and the idea of an ‘us’, as a native community (Anderson, 2013). For instance, Susana, a primary teacher, indicated that ‘the foreign children who have recently arrived in Chile are different from our usual children; their cultures and ways of behaving at school are different’. Susana’s discourse is aligned with those of other teachers, such as Silvia, a primary teacher, who pointed out in one of the conversations we had during my fieldwork that she considered that Afro-descendant migrant children, in particular, ‘are a novelty’ for Chile and that ‘daily at school, they show very different attitudes from what Chileans are used to’. In this sense, culture is one of the main distinctive sources that teachers use when narrating migrant children. However, the degree of distinction appears to depend on the assumed level of cultural assimilation that the children have. To put it another way, children who have recently arrived in Chile aligned with the new migratory flows from Caribbean countries will be positioned as even more different than those who belong to more deeply rooted communities in Chile, such as Peruvians of Bolivian origin. Therefore, the northern identity to which the teachers refer is constructed in relation to Peruvians and Bolivians, hence, it is contrasted with reference to the migration of other nationalities.

In the north, diversity is understood as part of our normality. It is not difficult for the northern child to interact with Peruvians and Bolivians because historically the north has been pluricultural, because of the nitrate works, and because of the port. However, now other types of migrants have arrived that we are not used to. (Omar, primary teacher)

As Iquique is placed in a border region, many teachers highlighted the migratory movements that have existed in the zone, even going so far as to make a distinction with respect to the migratory flows that are usually attributed to Chile but that occur mainly in the capital of Chile, Santiago. Tapia Ladino (2017) has extensively studied *transfrontericidad* (cross-bordering areas) in the northern border regions of Chile and describes them as a:

space in constant tension that runs between social interaction and economic integration on the one hand, especially due to the mobility of its inhabitants and the border trade; and the demands and processes of bordering or reinforcing the borders, on the other. (Tapia Ladino & Chacón Onetto, 2016, p. 133, my translation)

Here, it is important to highlight how generative a reading of the habitus is from a critical realist lens. Utilising a critical realist perspective as a way to understand habitus adds a reflexive feature to it and takes into account the pre-existing social relations that occur regardless of the interaction of the social actors, in this case, the relations among teachers and migrant children in schools. The *transfrontericidad* that Tapia describes produces a series of border mobility relations that respond to historical and contextual events in the area. In this regard, this set of socio-spatial relations generated in the Tarapacá Region is part of the discursive references that teachers will include in their narratives about migrant children. Given that the teachers are aware of the migratory movements in the area, of the

territorial conflicts with Bolivia and Peru – which were introduced in the methodological section of this article – and of the uniqueness of the northern area of Chile, the habitus of the school staff will be nourished by that set of spatial relationships which are characteristic of the area, and which will allow them to enact these dispositions in discourses towards migrant childhood and otherness.

## **The production of otherness at discursive and institutional levels**

### *Generating homogeneous categories of migrant childhood*

Following the analysis outlined previously, this section will show how the members of the school staff produce otherness in two interrelated dimensions, namely, the discursive and the institutional levels.

In terms of childhood, rather than referring to children's subjectivities or positionalities, teachers mainly focused on collective categories of migrant children. It seemed that each group was homogeneous in its composition. According to Castillo Goncalves (2020), positioning migrant children as homogeneous would narrow the scope of their actions and could harm and stigmatise them. Discursively, the ways in which I identified that the school staff produce otherness and narrate migrant students include metonymy, in which some specific characteristics of certain students are extended to a whole group or a whole nationality. Most of the teachers positively value Bolivian and Peruvian migrants' arrival because the surrounding discourses indicate that the migrants from these locations are more responsible, hard-working, respectful and disciplined. This trend has been recognised in studies by Mondaca et al. (2018), Stefoni and Stang (2016) and Marín-Alaniz (2018) on school and migration in Chile. For instance, Javiera, a primary teacher, recognised in one of the daily conversations we had that certain stereotypes that she heard in other schools about Bolivian migrants were confirmed in her experience: 'many people say that Bolivian students are calm and polite and most of those I have met in this school are like that'. Her view is representative of those of other teachers in the school, in that it positions migrants from Colombia and Haiti as a less desirable group because they may not respond to the institutional codes of Chilean education. For example, Carolina, a history teacher, indicated that they may be more difficult to educate and less docile when transforming their behaviours:

Since most of our students are Peruvian and Bolivian, there is not much difference with them given the large number of Peruvian and Bolivian population that we have here in our country and especially in our region. So, it is not an issue that is so difficult to address. The Peruvian or Bolivian child does not feel out of place, does not feel so foreign. This is different from what happens in the integration of children of other nationalities, such as Haitians, Colombians and Venezuelans. The children of Colombia are different. For example, Colombian children have a different attitude than their classmates who are more children, they come with another experience from Colombia, so our relationships with them are more difficult.

Carolina, then, highlights the importance of a northern identity in which Peruvian and Bolivian cultures prevail in Chile. Therefore, Peruvian and Bolivian migrant children should fit in better with Chilean 'cultural standards'. Additionally, Carolina tends to hierarchise children's nationalities and conflates the relationship between childhood and innocence, using both almost as synonyms. Specifically, Carolina assumes that 'being more a child' implies having a greater degree of innocence and directly links that 'way of being' with the origin and nationality of these children. In this sense, using the 'generational relations' between teachers and migrant children allows me to understand how the discourse developed by teachers relies on universal ideas about childhood in which the notion of innocence will reign over and will consequently lay the foundations of the desired childhood in school.

Discursively, Carolina tended to stereotype migrant children and reduce the dimensions in which children from diverse backgrounds could build their subjectivity. According to her, having certain attitudes may correspond directly to the children's country of origin. Instead of a link with historical characteristics of the territories from which children came from or with a shared colonial heritage in Latin America, it seems that Carolina related 'critical moments' of children with stereotypes and caricatures that, in some cases, the media provides in relation to migrants. For instance, here, Carolina spontaneously uses media representations of migration to argue and make a case in relation to migrant children:

If you watch the news, you notice that what happens in school is the same as the news. It is going to sound super bad what I am going to tell you. But we always see this issue in the news that Colombians are hitmen, that we must be careful. We got a Colombian girl who has just that attitude, she is like the '*matona*' [bully], the bad girl who gives you a dirty look. As a teacher, I feel intimidated with the attitude that the girl has.

Therefore, teachers used sources outside their educational setting to refer to social difference and migration, assuming broad discourses in their ways of framing migrant students. In this sense, the teachers' discourses, as in the case of Carolina, may draw on media representations of migration to frame migrant children at school. Likewise, the discursive construction of migrant children is carried out by producing differences and ranking students according to their nationality, and homogenising characteristics attributed to certain nationalities, which results in a reductionist and stereotyped vision of migrant childhood.

At the institutional level, the teachers referenced the diversity of students of different origins as a way to enrich the daily school practices. In addition, some key members of the administrative staff used sources from the policies and guides of the Ministry of Education to support the school opening to otherness, as Vicente, Behavioural Leader explained:

This is an open school that does not distinguish to enrol in. We enrol all the students who arrive at the school. We make no distinction of any kind. As it is a municipalised (public) school, it has no admissions process, nothing. We welcome every student who comes here to school, regardless of the grades or background that they come with.

It may be understood that enrolling migrant students is considered as an obligation or a mandate of a school that does not have an admissions system because public schools do not have a selection process for entry. I can assert that the institutional habitus of the school is built on the opportunities and restrictions that its public character provides. In other words, the enactment of education policy that Vicente embodies in his habitus does not correspond to the school's political position in the face of social difference. His would seem to be a response to the possibilities that the normative institutionality in Chile generates. Therefore, the 'acceptance' of migrant children in the school is only the materialisation of a mandatory statement of openness. In this sense, it can be understood that after admission, the school concern turns to the 'management' of diversity and to looking for ways to discipline behaviours, as outlined above with the case of Colombian and Haitian students. Consequently, the 'ethos of inclusion' (Berg et al., 2019) appears only to be present at the discursive level and not in the practices operationalised in the school. Likewise, school conviviality processes may not be sufficient to achieve an 'ethos of mixing' (Wessendorf, 2013).

## Conclusion

This article presented and analysed the discourses of the staff members and teachers of a school located in northern Chile about migrant children and described the production of otherness at the discursive and institutional levels. In this sense, using a critical realist and Bourdieusian approach shows how teachers' habitus was shaped by various types of relationships anchored in the school field and fuelled by various sources and references to everyday practices. State-school relations and educational policies were incorporated in a nuanced way into the habitus of the teachers. On the one hand, school personnel with management roles enacted the school institutional habitus in their discourses and embraced the inclusive principles of the Ministry of Education guidelines as explicit purposes of the school. On the other hand, most of the teachers seemed to distance themselves from the national educational policies. Then, daily and local experiences of the northern zone became the main articulator of the diversity incorporated in their habitus.

Although at the discursive level, the teachers celebrate diversity in the school, at the institutional level, they promoted an ethos of tolerance and diversity management to homogenise the differences attributed to cultural distinctions. Therefore, migrant students were subject to othering and stratified according to their origin, adaptation, and roots in Chile. In this sense, intergenerational relations supported the teachers' dispositions towards childhood since they positioned children in direct connection with their nationalities. Consequently, children were stereotyped, and their behaviours were ranked concerning the level of innocence assumed as an inherent characteristic of their cultural backgrounds.

Finally, the socio-spatial relations were crucial in the production of dispositions of the habitus towards social difference. The *transfrontericidad* experienced in the northern zone nourished the teachers' narratives, and they responded discursively to the tension and uniqueness of the northern school space. In this regard, migratory movements

were recognised as a constant element that influenced both the northern identity and the construction of imaginaries about the Chilean community.


### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID) (grant number 72170310).

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### Note

1. During the last ten years, Chile has positioned itself as a host country for migrants (Canales, 2019) and has progressively increased migratory flows from neighbouring South and Central American countries. The migrant population in Chile increased from 4.35% (746,465 migrant residents) of the total national population in 2017 to 7.8%, approximately (1,492,522 migrants) in 2019 (INE and DEM, 2020).

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