

ORIGINAL

Multimodal inclusive narratives Of people of african descent in Chile

Narrativas inclusivas multimodales de afrodescendientes en Chile

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: within the framework of Law 21.151 of 2019 from the Ministry of Social Development, which granted legal recognition to the Afro-Chilean tribal people, an elective course is offered at a public university to implement Article 4, which promotes the teaching of the history, language, and culture of Afro-descendants in the country at all school levels.

Objective: to develop a pedagogical strategy that promotes inclusion, interculturality, and the historical memory of the Afro-Chilean people.

Method: using inductive coding methodology and the systematic presentation of frequencies in eight semi-structured interviews, 13 accessible narratives or multimodal stories (picture stories and audiobooks) and 44 significant statements were produced.

Results: the analysis of the childhood experiences of eight Afro-Chilean women led to the production of a series of multimodal narratives that promote respect for the identity and human rights of the Afro-Chilean population. Three categories emerged: Afro-descendant identity (53 %), racism and exclusion (29 %), and agency and resistance (18 %). The findings underscore the identity recognition and cultural pride of Afro-Chilean women, which are strained by discrimination and balanced by strategies of leadership and resilience.

Conclusions: multimodal narratives re-historicize silenced memories, promote anti-racist and intersectional pedagogical practices, and foster symbolic reparations within the framework of human rights. Therefore, it is recommended that multimodal narratives be integrated into higher education and that access be expanded through Chilean Sign Language interpretation.

Keywords: Racism; Afro; Multimodal Narrative; Afro-Chileans; Human Rights.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en el marco de la Ley 21.151 de 2019 del Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, que otorgó el reconocimiento legal al pueblo tribal afrodescendiente chileno. Se imparte en una universidad pública, un

electivo para dar aplicación al artículo 4, que propende por la enseñanza en todos los niveles escolares “de la historia, lenguaje y cultura de los afrodescendientes” del país.

Objetivo: desarrollar una estrategia pedagógica que promueva la inclusión, la interculturalidad y la memoria histórica del pueblo afrochileno.

Método: metodología de codificación inductiva y la presentación sistemática de frecuencias en ocho entrevistas semiestructuradas, se produjeron 13 relatos accesibles o narrativas multimodales (pictocuento y audiolibro), y 44 enunciados significativos.

Resultados: el análisis de las experiencias de infancia de ocho mujeres afrodescendientes en Chile para la producción de una serie de narrativas multimodales que promuevan el respeto por la identidad y los derechos humanos de la población afrochilena. Mostraron tres categorías: identidad afrodescendiente (53 %), racismo y exclusión (29 %) y agencia y resistencia (18 %). Los hallazgos, subrayan el reconocimiento identitario y el orgullo cultural de las mujeres afrochilenas, tensionados por la discriminación, y equilibrados con estrategias de liderazgo y resiliencia.

Conclusiones: las narrativas multimodales re-historizan memorias silenciadas, impulsan prácticas pedagógicas antirracistas e interseccionales y promueven en los derechos humanos la reparación simbólica. Por lo tanto, se recomienda integrar relatos multimodales en la educación superior y ampliar el acceso con traducciones a Lengua de Señas Chilena.

Palabras clave: Racismo; Afrodescendientes; Narrativa Multimodal; Afrochilenas; Derechos Humanos.

INTRODUCTION

Human rights emerged in the context of a society where existing inequalities necessitated a legal framework to safeguard the fundamental freedoms inherent to human beings. Events such as the French Revolution had already revealed this need, as individuals belonging to the state were subjected to such violations that led to the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights.

In this scenario, one of the violations that occurred was an attack on the physical integrity of some people because of their origin, race, ethnicity, skin color, among other factors. As a result, their freedom, opportunities, and well-being were frequently violated.

Therefore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁽¹⁾ served as a starting point for addressing these violations through international agreements, in which states committed to ensuring that such situations would not continue to occur, thereby establishing rights and duties for all people in recognition of their inherent human dignity.

Even so, guaranteeing these rights has been the subject of extensive work by States. Despite the abolition of slavery, racism persisted, requiring international action such as ILO Convention 169,⁽²⁾ the World Summit Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,⁽³⁾ the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,⁽⁴⁾ and the Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).⁽⁵⁾ In line with these international provisions, Chile signed Law No. 21,151 of April 16, 2019,⁽⁶⁾ which grants legal recognition to the Afro-descendant people of the southern country.

In Chile, 2025 marked the 214th anniversary of the publication of the Ley de Libertad de Vientres (Law of Freedom of the Womb), enacted on October 15, 1811.⁽⁷⁾ This law was one of the most important legal instruments drafted by Chile's First National Congress, as it established that the children of enslaved mothers would be free at birth from the moment of its enactment. This marked a precursor to the total abolition of slavery, which occurred on July 24, 1823, positioning the Republic of Chile at the forefront of the worldwide abolitionist struggle. Recognizing the significance of October 15 means observing, in a context of reflection and construction of historical memory, the long road traveled by the Afro-Chilean people and their descendants. Among the milestones in this process are the Santiago + 5 Conference held in the metropolitan region in 2000 and the creation of the non-governmental organization for the development of Chilean Afro-descendants, Oro Negro, in 2001.

The design of multimodal narratives contributes to the cognitive dimension through multiple disciplinary approaches.⁽⁸⁾ to understand ethnic-cultural diversity as a sociolinguistic contribution. By making the life stories of Afro-descendants visible, ways of being and existing in the present are expressed, including processes of inequality and exclusion, remnants of the ideological biases of segregation inherited from the colonial period, which persist to this day. Rehistorizations make intercultural life experiences visible, which is necessary to raise awareness of the social context that underpins the socio-legal guidelines for dignifying ethnic groups and multiculturalism within the framework of Law 21.151 of 2019.⁽⁹⁾

Commemorating history to dignify life through language as an ethnic, social, and cultural component involves promoting a platform for communication and expression to strengthen the voice of Chilean Afro-

descendants in the exercise of their rights, bridging gaps of colonial silence through democratic voices today.⁽¹⁰⁾ The pedagogical experience of learning together and collaboratively, through being, knowing, and doing, is an act that challenges how society conceives of and relates to itself. In this process, the current generations in formation become agents of change, contributing with their formative process to the promotion of rights, the recognition of the other,⁽¹¹⁾ and the reconfiguration of social representations in the nation-state.

Many perspectives on everyday life celebrate citizenship, social integration, speaking out, and the possibility of an intercultural life, the result of diverse, multilateral, heterogeneous, and intercultural struggles that have marked the history of Chile,⁽¹²⁾ as recognized since the Bicentennial, with the participation, leadership, and contributions of Afro-descendant women,⁽¹³⁾ explains how individuals learn from everyday events, the characteristics of their environment, the information that circulates, and the people close to them or far away. This learning is referred to as spontaneous knowledge or common sense, in contrast to scientific thinking.⁽¹⁴⁾

This implies a reinterpretation of social representations⁽¹⁵⁾ and the inclusion of elements in university education, gradually addressing these academic practices and questioning access to information in virtual formats of situated narratives. This highlights communicative exclusion, as well as the need to include ethnic-cultural figures, including those of African descent.⁽¹⁵⁾ From a female perspective, liberation from patriarchy is based on questioning assumptions that no longer allow it to be configured as a genealogical obsession.⁽¹⁶⁾ In essence, it is a struggle against tradition, inheritance, the aristocratic idea of lineage, and the regime.

In relation to this, Ibáñez⁽¹⁷⁾ suggest that humanity consists of two distinct bodies and that women should participate in citizenship and democracy as women, that is, as concrete and corporeal individuals with capacities other than giving birth and creating life, and not as abstract, disembodied, and masculine individuals.

This is essential for revealing structural power and subordination relationships, and thus, not rebuilding tradition, but rather considering alternatives to achieve truly democratic citizenship. Therefore, having access to women's life experiences is crucial to fully understanding the dynamics of power and subordination that affect them, allowing for more genuine and equitable inclusion in all aspects of social and political life. In this sense, within the context of collaborative learning, communication processes are fostered that give voice to the diverse ways of life of women of African descent, who have much to contribute, share, and experience.

This is the prelude to the themes of diversity, highlighting that history, inclusion, and interculturality are interconnected to contribute to an approach to human empathy, aiming to reduce fears of social and ideological, phenotypic, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and human plurality biases in general.⁽¹⁸⁾ This makes it possible to establish a better relationship in the communicative dyad with university students in the context of Chile's Bicentennial of the abolition of slavery,⁽¹⁹⁾ expanding the repertoire of stories to narrate the Other, that is, our women of African descent, who have been narrated from unique voices. A single narrative generates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are false, but that they are partial, transforming a single version into the only possible one.⁽²⁰⁾

Within this framework, a regional university created, as part of its teaching innovation processes, the Comprehensive Training Elective in Diversity and Afro-descendant Studies, which for three years has sought to put into practice the provisions of Article 4 of the law as mentioned above, since, as part of the education system, it should have a programmatic unit on the subject, so that university students have access to adequate knowledge of the history, language, and culture of Chilean Afro-descendants, in addition to promoting their artistic and cultural expressions.⁽⁶⁾

In a joint project with students from the Comprehensive Education Elective (EFI) Diversity and Afro-descendant Studies, the cognitive dimension is studied, which contributes to communicative competence to enable the development of stories through inclusive narratives (picture stories and audiobooks). In this way, the path taken to problematize and interpret verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal meaning for the comprehensive and harmonious development of multimodal language favors a joint interdisciplinary academic exercise in the creation of materials to be housed in the Virtual Communication and Language Laboratory, in a binding dyad with the environment to ensure the substantive functions of the alma mater, academic life, and future professional work.

The premise of the course's research-based approach to teaching is the connection with the community on the part of the students, to reveal through re-historicization what the childhoods of Afro-descendant women living in the second region are like. In this way, the symmetrical communicative relationship with the social environment is problematized; the exercise of human rights is recognized; and social inclusion with an intercultural approach is considered as a mechanism for interdisciplinary and global action to guarantee respect for rights and reduce emerging inequality gaps in the country's school contexts.

This assumption is based on the fact that Chile is a multiethnic nation whose historical and cultural processes have been marked by the presence of the African diaspora, the incorporation of territories with Afro-descendant populations, and, more recently, by Afro-migration. In this context, the Antofagasta Region stands out as the second-largest in terms of the number of migrants of African descent, serving as a key settlement hub alongside Arica and Parinacota. The latter region—which belonged to Peru until the early 20th century—was historically a

center of the slave trade and home to the painful and misnamed “slave nurseries,” which have contributed to the construction of an imaginary that ignores Afro-descendants as a legitimate part of Chilean identity.

However, studies such as *Afro-Chileans: A Hidden History* by Marta Salgado Henríquez⁽²¹⁾ have documented that, as early as the 1813 census, there were approximately 30 000 people of African descent in the territory. The first republican census categorized the population according to origin and caste, distinguishing between Spaniards, mestizos, mulattos, Indians, and blacks. However, ethnic categories were eliminated from subsequent censuses, consolidating a national narrative focused on mestizaje and omitting recognition of ethnic-racial diversity.^(22,23) This omission particularly affected the Afro-descendant population, which was not considered part of the Chilean republican project and did not benefit from the policies of recognition and cultural protection applied to indigenous peoples. Despite isolated efforts, such as the 2013 Afro Census in Arica and Parinacota⁽²⁴⁾ or Law 21.151,⁽⁶⁾ statistical exclusion persists.⁽²⁴⁾

According to the INE⁽²⁵⁾, in 2021, the foreign population residing in Chile reached 1 482 390 people, of whom 7,2 % lived in Antofagasta. However, these figures do not include a breakdown by African descent, which highlights a historical debt owed to the Afro-descendant tribal people in terms of visibility, public policies, and recognition as part of the Chilean identity. In this sense, the teaching-research study posed the question: How does the process of creating multimodal narratives about the childhood experiences of women of African descent, developed by university students, facilitate the systematization of situated knowledge about Afro-Chilean identity and document intercultural pedagogical transformations in the context of higher education? Consequently, the objective of this research is to develop a critical analysis of the use of multimodal narratives based on the experiences of Afro-descendants in Chile, as pedagogical strategies for an intercultural education that highlights historical memory, from inherited inequalities and the legal recognition of Afro-descendant people in Law 21.151 of 2019.

METHOD

During the EFI Diversity and Afro-Descendant Studies courses offered at the public university of Antofagasta, Chile, in 2021, 2022, and 2023, students were asked to identify fundamental aspects of Afro-descendant ethnic-cultural diversity as historical subjects. Through a practical approach, they applied knowledge about the history, language, and culture of Afro-descendants in Chile, developing communication skills in intercultural contexts. The course focused on Language and Culture, integrating research with teaching to address interculturality and inclusive Afro narratives, culminating in the creation of an inclusive multimodal narrative as the final product.

The proposal is based on a dialogue-based methodology,⁽²⁶⁾ where multimodal, inclusive narratives reflect the realities experienced by women of African descent. Through conversation, reality becomes text, allowing students to construct and reinterpret data in their narratives. This means that data does not preexist, but is created in stages or steps within a relational context, exploring various possibilities of language.

The design of narrative as a linguistic strategy promotes inclusive intercultural communication among students in the course through: a) the development of an e-portfolio for the collection of class reflections based on readings and discussions with an ethnic and gender focus; b) interviews as a way to foster intercultural relations; and c) writing inclusive multimodal narratives with data from the interviews for dissemination in different formats—picture stories and audiobooks.

The construction of the narrative by each student followed a process of dialogue with Afro-descendant women, interpretation, classification, editing, and layout of the pictorial stories and audio stories. Emphasis is placed on the early childhood experiences of Afro-Chilean women in the north of the country, compiled using the procedures described below.

Teaching-research procedure: students in the elective course received pedagogical training in multimodal narrative, support in searching for and approaching Afro-Chilean women for interviews, instruction in scriptwriting, and guidance in conducting semi-structured interviews. Similarly, the stories and informed consent forms of the women interviewed by the students were compiled for dissemination in multiple formats, including as an e-book. To this end, collaboration was obtained from a communication and language laboratory, which included style review of the basic writings for the development of inclusive multimodal narratives in audiobook and pictorial story formats—the students selected which one to apply—as well as subsequent style review of the narratives by the course instructor.

The guideline for identifying participants was to identify women of African descent in the students' immediate context who were willing to be interviewed to recount their childhood experiences from their ethnic diversity. The students informed each woman that they would be writing stories based on their experiences. The guidance given for interviewing the women consisted of a series of questions about food, customs, where they attended primary school, and, in general, what they remembered most about their childhood, seeking to establish an open dialogue in which the interviewee could freely recount her life story with an emphasis on her childhood. To write the story, each student was instructed to use the interviewee's story to construct a short narrative (maximum 200 words) aimed at children up to nine years old, using inclusive and straightforward language.

Participants, sample, and analysis: the stories written by 13 of the 103 students who took the course between 2021 and 2022 were included in this research. The sample was intentionally selected; women who met the specific criteria of being of African descent and were willing to share their childhood stories voluntarily were chosen. Thus, for the analysis, the thirteen stories that were included were based on eight interviews with eight women of African descent. The stories analyzed were previously selected by the students to be transformed into inclusive multimodal narratives,⁽²⁷⁾ including adaptations to be presented in pictostory and audiobook formats, as described in table 1. Informed consent was obtained from both the students and the women interviewed, who provided biographical information for the creation of narratives by the students.

Table 1. Sample: Inclusive multimodal narratives			
Year-Sem.	N. E.	No. of R.	Story Title
2021-II	1	1	Awareness of being different - I am different**
2021-II	4	4	A Poorly Told Story**
2021-II	6	7	Recognizing Part of Myself**
2021-II	10	11	Afrochilena soy
2022-I	11	12	A life to live
2022-I	11	13	Rita's life
2022-I	12	15	My skin color
2022-I	14	18	Dance - Let the dance continue
2022-I	14	19	Steps of the soul
2022-I	1a	23	Braids
2022-I	15	24	The anniversary party
2022-I	12a	26	Teams
2022-I	16	31	My hair, my story

Note: based on the accounts of students in the elective course Diversity and Afro-Descendant Studies, cohorts 2021-II and 2022-I. Year-sem. = year and semester in which the interview and account were conducted; N.E. = interview number and N.R. = consecutive account number. The difference in the consecutive interview number, for example, between 1 and 1a indicates that the same person was interviewed at two different times by different students; when the interview number is repeated alone or with a letter, it indicates that several stories were made from the same interview, for example: 11 and 14.

****** Accounts in audiobook and pictorial story format; the rest are in audiobook format.

The narratives produced and compiled correspond mainly to Afro-2 n women; the inclusion and exclusion criteria were directly related to gender. All the women interviewed identify as Afro-descendants; they are between 12 and 74 years old, with an average age of 47,6 (median: 50,5 and mode: none); all are Chilean nationals, of whom three report having Peruvian (2) and Colombian (1) ancestors. Regarding the students who conducted the interviews and wrote the stories, 9 are women and 4 are men; they are between 18 and 31 years old, with a mean age of 22,9 (SD: 2,9; mode: 21). All are Chilean nationals.⁽²⁸⁾

The thirteen (13) stories analyzed had an average of 2 019,2 words (median: 187 and mode: 346), with the shortest story having 116 words and the longest 525. The stories in this study's sample were taken directly from the students' portfolios and have not been edited for style or content. In some cases, it was necessary to make spelling corrections in the statements that were to be presented in the description of emerging categories and subcategories identified.⁽²⁹⁾ The analysis was conducted using a qualitative content approach that guided the classification, grouping, association, and interpretation of the implicit experiences of the Afro-descendant women interviewed, based on the students' perspectives and the impressions they conveyed in their stories. This process enabled intuitive, reflective, and creative access to the identification and interpretation of latent representations that account for the childhoods of women shaped by their identity as Afro-descendants in Chile.

Initially, an exploratory reading of the stories was conducted to construct a general understanding of the content. Subsequently, an in-depth rereading was performed, which enabled the coding of themes and experiences, resulting in the identification of a total of 17 analytical codes from 44 significant statements that were segmented and classified. See table 2 for details of the analytical codes.

Table 2. Themes in students' accounts of the childhood of women of African descent in Chile. Analytical coding

# code	Unified description	Recurrence	Reference accounts
14	Afro-descendant origins in Chile: Recognition and criticism	8	4, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18
3	Agency and cultural leadership of African descent	7	1,7,18,19
4	Manifestations of racialized discrimination	6	1,15,26
9	Discovery of Afro-descendant cultural identity	4	1,6,16
1	Decolonial educational practices	2	18,19
5	Self-acceptance and positive construction of Afro-descendant identity	2	7,15
6	Reinterpreting Afro hair as a symbol of identity	2	23,31
10	Life project based on education	2	12,13
13	Internalization of racism from childhood	2	15,31
15	Religious celebrations as an expression of Afro-descendant identity	2	12,31
2	Experiences of racialized bullying at school	1	7
7	Confused perception of Afro-descendant cultural belonging	1	15
8	Criticism of the Chilean school curriculum for its white/mestizo focus	1	4
11	Recognition of Afro identity: pride and belonging	1	10
12	Food as a means of cultural exchange among Afro-descendants at school	1	11
16	Resilience: recognition of Afro-descendant equality and personal dignity	1	1
17	Active defense of Afro identity	1	24

Source: based on the accounts of students in the elective course Diversity and Afro-descendant Studies, cohorts 2021-II and 2022-I.

In this sense, the analytical codes were an abstraction that sought to answer the questions: What is the story about? And what did the person who caught the student's attention and was included in their story experience or feel, whether in the first or third person? Subsequently, the themes and experiences were grouped and reorganized into categories and subcategories. To group the codes in table 2 into categories and subcategories of content analysis, common thematic axes, conceptual relationships, and recurrences were identified, allowing the data to be organized hierarchically as described in table 3.

Table 3. Categories, subcategories, and code frequencies

Category	Subcategories	Main codes (frequency)
1. Afro-descendant identity (53 %)	Recognition and affirmation of origin	Afro-descendant origins: Recognition and criticism (8)
	Cultural construction of identity	Discovery of cultural identity (4); Self-acceptance (2);
	Traditions and daily life	Religious celebrations (2); Cultural exchange in food (1)
	Ambiguity or identity conflict	Identity conflict (1)
2. Racism and exclusion (29 %)	Direct discrimination	Manifestations of racialized discrimination (6)
	Institutional or symbolic discrimination	Criticism of the white/mestizo curriculum (1)
3. Agency and resistance (18 %)	Leadership and participation	Afro-descendant cultural agency and leadership (7)
	Resilience and empowerment	Life project based on education (2)

This analytical grouping allowed for the interpretation of the experiences narrated around three semantic axes: identity, racism, and resistance. These axes emerge from the content expressed by the Afro-descendant

women interviewed, through the approach taken by the students in writing the accounts. The categorical structure used responds to an inductive-flexible approach typical of qualitative content analysis.

RESULTS

The description of results is presented in relation to the emergence of three main categories: Afro-descendant identity, with 53 % of the total codes; Racism and exclusion, with 29 %; and Agency and resistance, with 18 %. This shows a significant concentration on aspects of identity (53 % of codes) and experiences of exclusion (29 % of codes), revealing the intersectionality between identity construction and experiences of discrimination, as well as the conceptual unity between the categories illustrated in figure 1.

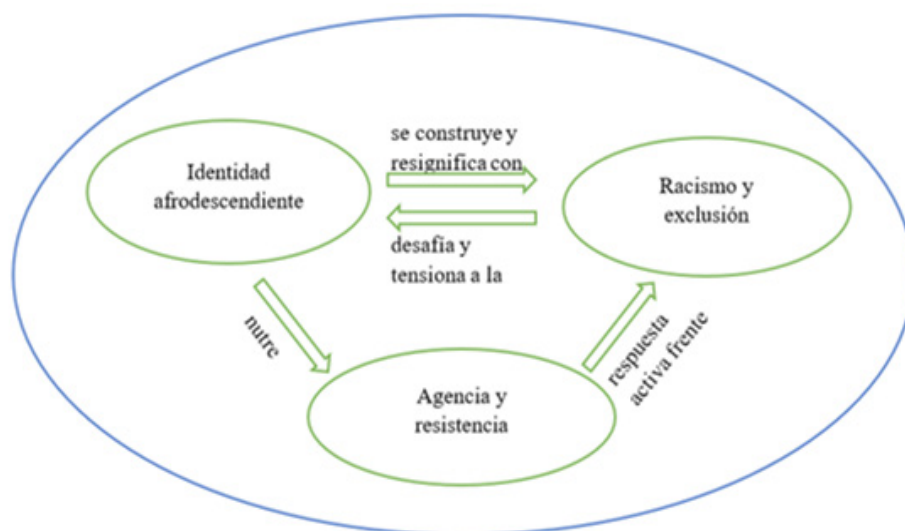


Figure 1. Central categories in the narratives about the childhood of women of African descent in Chile

The relationships between categories reveal a dynamic and interdependent process. Afro-descendant identity and racism have a bidirectional relationship: experiences of discrimination strain self-affirmation, while strengthening identity provides tools to confront exclusion. In turn, racism catalyzes agency and resistance, driving the formation of cultural groups and educational initiatives. Identity is also motivationally connected to resistance: ethnic pride stimulates active participation and community leadership. Thus, the categories do not operate in isolation, but feed into each other in a cycle of recognition, challenge, and empowerment.

Afro-descendant identity: The Afro-descendant identity emerges in the narratives as a complex process that evolves from the recognition of phenotypic differences to the active construction of an ethnic and cultural identity. This category is structured around three subcategories that describe interrelated moments in this process: the recognition and affirmation of origin, the cultural construction of identity, and identity ambiguity or conflict. These subcategories reflect a journey in which girls of African descent, according to the students' interpretation, first become aware of their difference, then redefine their physicality and roots, and finally develop strategies for self-affirmation in contexts where their identity is questioned or made invisible.

Recognition and affirmation of origin: This subcategory identifies fragments that reflect the moment when the women interviewed recognize their Afro-descendant heritage and reframe their family history. The affirmation of this identity is related to pride in African ancestry and history, in contrast to the invisibility experienced in the school environment. This thematic core accounted for 19 % of the codes. For example, one account states: "I am Afro-Ariqueña. My lineage comes from the history of my Afro-descendant parents from the Azapa Valley in Arica, Chile. I grew up knowing my Afro-Ariqueña culture, inherited from my ancestors" (R18:E14:S30).

Other accounts reinforce the affirmation of identity from a family and migratory perspective. One woman states: "My name is ..., daughter of Bolivian parents. I was born in Iquique but spent most of my life in Antofagasta" (R10:E9:S14). This recognition is linked to an awareness transmitted within the family unit: "My mother, also a woman of African descent and aware of this reality, told me on several occasions that I could be discriminated against because of my skin color" (R11:E10:S17).

Cultural construction of identity: This subcategory encompasses experiences related to the discovery of differences, self-acceptance, and the appreciation of physical and cultural traits associated with African descent, such as hair or the celebration of traditions. It represents 9 % of the codes. The stories highlight, for example, "I can say that I am proud of my roots, of the history of freedom that my braided hair represents" (R7:E6:S12), and also: "I discovered that Peruvian rhythm has African roots [...] because it brings back very fond memories of when I was little" (R7:E6:S11).

For some women, the discovery of their identity was fraught with tension and questioning due to the way those around them perceived their physicality. For example, one student recalls: “At the age of eleven, I became aware that I was different because of the color of my skin; some people didn’t like it, and society saw it as something bad, something that didn’t belong to them” (R1:E1:S3). This experience contrasts with other accounts where Afro identity is positively redefined: “As she grew up, she learned that her features were a beautiful part of her and that she should accept herself as she was [...]” (R15:E12:S27). However, there are also accounts of painful moments linked to the internalization of aesthetic standards: “Every time she looked in the mirror, she wondered why she had thick hair or swollen lips, and for her that meant she was ‘ugly’” (R15:E12:S26). Another account offers a perspective of positive appropriation from childhood, saying: “Because of our physical characteristics, we need to get quite wet for the water to really wet our hair; otherwise, it just slides over it” (R31:E16:S43).

Traditions and Everyday Life: This subcategory encompasses a range of diverse experiences. The subcategory refers to the presence of Afro-descendant cultural elements in everyday life, particularly in family and school environments, such as food, music, and festivities. The stories recount cultural exchanges, especially in the school context, where food appears as a link to recognition and appreciation of diversity. One example is: “Sometimes I let them try my food, because my mom cooked typical Colombian dishes” (R11:E10:S19). Another excerpt recalls an Afro-descendant celebration from the community experience: “Black Easter is celebrated on January 6 every year [...] the wise man ‘Balthazar’ represents the Afro-descendant people” (R12:E11:S23).

Ambiguity or identity conflict: This subcategory addresses the difficulties that some women describe regarding their sense of ethnic belonging in childhood, whether due to family ignorance or tensions between Afro and Chilean identities. It accounts for 2 % of the codes. An example is: “I always saw that my family and I were part of a culture, but at that age I didn’t know it. My African ancestry came from my grandparents” (R15:E12:S28).

Racism and exclusion: The category of racism and exclusion allows us to identify the mechanisms of symbolic and explicit discrimination experienced by women of African descent during their childhood. The stories collected by the students reveal the persistence of racism in school, social, and territorial spaces, and how these affected the construction of identity. This category is organized into two subcategories: direct discrimination and institutional or symbolic discrimination.

Direct discrimination: This includes accounts of bullying, insults, name-calling, and physical and verbal aggression. There are also experiences of bodily racialization and questioning of nationality. This category represented 14 % of the codes. Significant examples are: “They called me names like ‘negra curiche’” (R1:E1:S2); “He yelled at me, ‘Negra!’, trying to offend me, and then he spat in my face” (R1:E1:S4); or “They were curious about my skin color and asked me: ‘What country were you born in?’ I replied: ‘I was born here, I’m Chilean!’” (R11:E10:S18).

In addition to these experiences, there are other forms of symbolic and verbal violence. One account reads: “They teased me and shunned me, they would grab me and pull my hair, calling me ‘caveman captain’” (R31:E16:S42). Another case mentions: “Once, while playing tag with her classmates, they told her that she would be the color black because her skin was darker than theirs” (R15:E12:S25).

Institutional or symbolic discrimination: This includes experiences related to the invisibility of Afro-descendant history in the school curriculum and the reproduction of a white/mestizo approach to education. It accounted for 5 % of the codes. One account reads: “They have denied Afro-descendants by removing them from the school curriculum, [...] they have not taught us the true history since Chile became a republic” (R4:E4:S9). Another account problematizes the construction of national history from a critical perspective: “Our ancestors were brought here through the slave trade... This is poorly taught in schools, which leads to the construction of a mistaken collective imagination of history” (R4:E4:S8).

Agency and resistance: This category covers how women of African descent exercise agency in the face of experiences of exclusion, building trajectories of empowerment, leadership, and sociocultural transformation. The subcategories that comprise it are: leadership and participation, and resilience and empowerment.

Leadership and participation: This reflects the active involvement of women of African descent in cultural, educational, or community groups, from which they promote the recognition of their identity. It accounted for 13 % of the codes. For example: “I joined the Oro Negro dance troupe as an Afro-Ariqueña dancer [...] I decided to create my own group” (R18:E14:S31-35); or “I currently work as an arts educator with children [...] where I share my beautiful culture” (R19:E14:S36). This leadership is also expressed in their own initiatives, as mentioned by one woman: “After participating in multiple dance groups, I decided to create my own group” (R19:E14:S35).

Resilience and empowerment: This includes stories where Afro-descendant identity is redefined as a source of strength, overcoming symbolic violence, and affirming a life project. It represented 5 % of the codes. For example: “I knew there was nothing wrong with me, that I was just like other children; the only thing different was my skin color” (R1:E1:S5); or “I focus on teaching boundaries based on respect, history, and [...] how to refer to ourselves as Afro-descendants or by my name” (R1:E1:S7). Another example reveals a verbal defense

charged with pride and identity awareness: “Haven’t you seen that you’re darker than me! And skin color is one thing, but being ugly enough to hit your mother is another” (R24:E15:S38). This response shows how resistance is not only introspective but also confrontational.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that identity recognition and experiences of discrimination form the central axis of Afro-descendant childhood memories, in which narratives of agency and resistance represent strategies for responding to invisibility. This emphasis supports Santos⁽¹⁰⁾ proposal on rehistoricization as a practice of Southern epistemologies, by making silenced family and territorial memories visible. Self-acceptance of phenotypic traits and the revival of traditions are part of processes of cultural re-signification that challenge the historical invisibility documented by Salgado Henríquez⁽¹⁷⁾.

The presence of racism in childhood—captured in the category *Racism and exclusion*—confirms the persistence of colonial practices of segregation and symbolic violence described by Díaz Araya⁽²²⁾. Accounts of direct and institutional discrimination show how schools function as a setting for the reproduction of white/mestizo stereotypes, reinforcing the need for anti-racist educational approaches that incorporate Afro-descendant content into the curriculum. The power of everyday practices highlights the role of culinary exchanges and festivities as markers of identity. This space for daily interaction reinforces Martínez-Lirola’s proposal⁽³⁰⁾ on popular culture as a pedagogical resource for interculturality. Integrating these practices into curriculum design can contribute to a more inclusive education that is sensitive to ethnic and cultural diversity.

For its part, the category of *Agency and Resistance* illustrates strategies of leadership and resilience that women of African descent deployed from childhood. These findings expand on the notion of cultural agency proposed by Hall⁽³¹⁾ by highlighting life projects based on education and the creation of artistic groups as forms of symbolic self-repair. The use of multimodal narratives, such as audio stories and picture stories, is emerging as a pedagogical tool that empowers new generations and promotes epistemic justice in school contexts.

In the political sphere, for the Afro-Chilean community, legal recognition as a tribal people—formalized in Law 21.155—is a milestone that supports their historical existence and cultural contributions to the country’s development. Along these lines, the ethnically situated narratives produced through teaching and research in the elective course Diversity and Afro-Descendant Studies not only contribute to an alternative official history⁽³²⁾ but also function as strategies for symbolic reparation and strengthening the place of Afro-Chilean women in the construction of the national collective memory.^(21,22)

As for working with multimodal formats, this promoted the development of basic and complex communication skills in students (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), articulated from an interethnic perspective. This educational practice not only facilitated genuine dialogue between different social worlds but also created safe symbolic spaces for recognizing difference, denouncing racism, and reaffirming Afro-descendant pride as a legitimate form of identity. The inclusive communication skills acquired during this experience align with the linguistic and cultural rights approach enshrined in Law 21.151,⁽⁶⁾ which promotes the recognition of the historical trajectory of people of African descent from the earliest levels of the education system. In this sense, multimodal narrative is presented not only as an expressive tool but also as a strategy for cultural and political transformation. This formative experience demonstrated that situated educational practices can promote not only cognitive learning but also the development of attitudes of empathy, justice, and critical agency in the face of the social inequalities that affect Afro-descendant peoples in Chile.

Multimodal narratives—including picture stories and audiobooks—were fundamental in diversifying modes of expression and ensuring the accessibility of the message. These formats served both a communicative purpose (to highlight structural and linguistic racism) and an educational function (to promote inclusive and anti-racist teaching practices in school settings). As Peralta Espinosa & Llerena Rodríguez show,⁽³³⁾ these narratives make it possible to connect the experiences of Afro-descendant children with contemporary educational frameworks that recognize the value of cultural and linguistic plurality.

In this sense, empirical evidence shows that the narratives generated by students not only capture childhood experiences but also function as a mechanism for *symbolic reparation* and the construction of frameworks for critical understanding. Incorporating the production of multimodal narratives into intercultural education courses can enhance communication skills and develop values of empathy and social justice, in line with Law 21.151 of 2019, which recognizes the cultural and linguistic rights of the Afro-descendant population. Additionally, the inductive coding methodology and systematic presentation of frequencies provide a replicable model for qualitative studies in educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings demonstrate how the process of creating multimodal narratives facilitates both the systematization of historically silenced memories and the intercultural education of new generations in higher education. This teaching-research methodology not only contributes to the strengthening of Afro-Chilean identity through the re-historicization of childhood experiences but also documents concrete pedagogical

transformations in the university student body.

The intercultural competencies developed by students during this process position them as active agents in the construction of situated knowledge and the promotion of inclusive educational practices, in line with the guidelines of Law 21.151 of 2019. The pedagogical experience demonstrated that collaborative learning, grounded in being, knowing, and doing, enables the rigorous systematization of Afro-descendant experiences while documenting the intercultural educational impact in university contexts. In this sense, the study makes a concrete contribution to the decolonization of the curriculum through the production of academic knowledge, situating, and documenting transformative pedagogical processes. As a science that regulates human behavior in society, law draws on scientific knowledge, such as the products of this research, opening replicable paths for the recognition and strengthening of cultural diversity in higher education and other social spheres in Chile and the world, where there is a need to integrate multimodal narratives into higher education and expand access with sign language translations, which promote anti-racist and intersectional pedagogical practices and symbolic reparation in human rights.

Limitations and prospects

The study was based on 13 narratives and lacked systematic comparisons with the complete transcripts of the interviews, which limits the triangulation of data. Future research should incorporate direct comparisons with the original testimonies and expand the sample to strengthen the external validity of the findings. It is also recommended to explore adaptations of the narratives into Chilean Sign Language (LSCh) and other accessible formats, to move toward truly intercultural and inclusive education.

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