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A Biographical-Narrative Inquiry to the Transitions of Latin American Immigrant Students: A Collective Case Study in the Context of Chilean Higher Education

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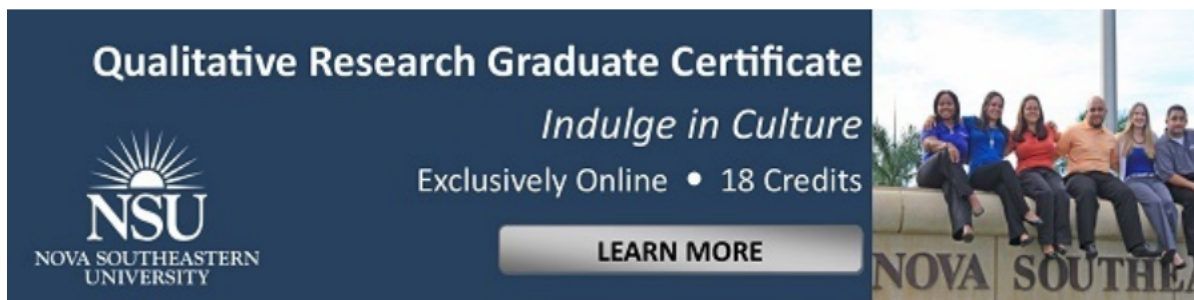


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Abstract

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Keywords

immigration, narratives, transitions, biographical narrative inquiry, Valparaíso Region

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A Biographical-Narrative Inquiry to the Transitions of Latin American Immigrant Students: A Collective Case Study in the Context of Chilean Higher Education

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Chile has positioned itself as an important receiving nation of immigrants in Latin America, which is evidenced by the emergence of foreign students in both universities and professional institutes. The main objective of this article is to understand the inclusion-exclusion factors of a group of Latin American students immersed in Chile's higher education system. The authors used a biographical-narrative inquiry to conduct eight in-depth interviews and a participatory group methodology in Chile's Valparaíso Region. The findings show that factors such as the presence of an influential adult figure, institutional welcoming mechanisms, access to work, and expectations of timely graduation and future residence all play a significant role in the educational transitions of these immigrant students who have experienced cultural and spatial changes. The study concludes that these types of elements translate into key protective factors in the successful educational transitions of this group of young immigrants, who have developed the journey from school to the university world.

Keywords: immigration, narratives, transitions, biographical narrative inquiry, Valparaíso Region

Introduction

Chile has emerged as a major recipient of immigrants from intra-regional "south-south" migration. This nation has experienced a sustained increase in the migratory flows it receives from 2001 to 2021, reaching a figure of 1.400.000 migrants residing in the country, which at that time represented 7.1% of the national population (INE, 2023). According to The International Organization for Migration data (IOM, 2018), in terms of pull factors, this south-south migratory movement has been motivated by the sustained growth and economic stability that Chile began to experience with the return of democracy in the early nineties. On the other hand, as reasons for emigration, we can mention the political and economic crises, as well as the situations of violence that Latin American countries have experienced and that have caused millions of citizens to emigrate, many of them to Chile (OIM, 2018).

As the University of Talca's National Center for Migration Studies points out (CENEM, 2020), most immigrants in Chile come from Venezuela (23%), Peru (17.9%), Haiti (14.3%), Colombia (11.7%), and Bolivia (8.6%). In terms of sociodemographics, the agency reports that 49% are women and 51% are men, with 45.1% between the ages of 30-45 and 44.5% between

the ages of 18-29. In terms of their primary activity, 84.1% are employed, 8% are looking for work, and 0.7% are students.

The emergence and acceleration of this Latin American migratory flow coincides with a significant increase in enrollments in educational institutions (Stefoni, 2017; Stefoni & Corvalán, 2019), primarily in Chilean public schools, resulting in a significant increase in the diversity of the student body. Thus, even though new cultural groups have been integrating into Chilean education, resulting in a student body with greater socioeconomic, gender, ethnic, and geographic heterogeneity, the truth is that only a small percentage will continue the path to university education¹, as a large percentage will enter the labor market. According to the Chilean National Institute of Youth (INJ, 2018), in 2002, 38% of immigrants aged 20-24 in Chile declared to be working; by 2017, this figure had risen to 64% of the same population. The same is true for the 25-29 age group, where 61% reported working in 2002 and 75% reported working in 2017.

Authors who address migrations in other countries such as Spanish educational environments, such as Sandín and Sánchez (2014) and Tarrés-Vallespí (2018), suggest that this group of non-traditional students is at a higher risk of academic dropout or non-continuation in their educational cycles. Indeed, other studies have shown that immigrant students are twice as likely as native students to drop out (Cano-Hila et al., 2016). In tune with the above, it would be appropriate to examine needs and dynamics developed by this student nucleus at certain critical vital points (Hein, 2012), such as the educational Transitions from school to university, and from there to the world of work.

Given the foregoing, it is worthwhile to inquire about the collective path of the Latin American students studying in Chile. In this regard, the questions to be answered are as follows: What factors impact the structures, the social interactions, and the subject's inner world? How is the set of obstacles and opportunities present in the collective trajectory explored characterized? To answer these questions, this study seeks to understand the inclusion-exclusion factors of eight Latin American students enrolled in Chile's higher education system to answer these questions. It investigates the turning points and expectations present in the macro, meso, and microstructures based on the narrated experience. It also discusses the challenges and opportunities identified in the educational transitions taken.

Literature Review

Educational Transitions and Trajectories

The metaphors used to describe the set of transitions that comprise the educational journey show some convergences among the approaches used to describe such paths. In the Catalan context, Cano-Hila et al. (2016) use trajectory to refer to the subject's educational transit as a series of cumulative and irreversible stages. For the authors, "to speak of transitions is to speak of change, of a transformation that requires a process of personal adaptation, often accompanied by stress, but they should not always be interpreted as negative, but rather as opportunities for development, knowledge, maturity, cultural evolution, self-improvement and intellectual reconstruction" (p. 1374).

According to Terigi (2014), the transitions that students and their families go through are heavily influenced by the social structures and characteristics of the institutions that provide educational access throughout their lives. An important consideration is that social structures influence the options available, implying various constellations of trajectories in the configuration of life paths (Gómez et al., 2021). Authors such as Cenobio-Narcizo et al. (2019)

¹ For these purposes, the concepts of higher, tertiary, university and post-compulsory education are synonymous.

and Faulkner et al. (2022) and emphasize the idea of how an individual's journey is a unit in which what happens during a critical period determines the subsequent trajectory. This point of view considers the changing contexts in people's experiences of growth and development (Bernardi et al., 2019; Elder & Johnson, 2002).

There are few studies on the educational transitions and trajectories of immigrants in Chile. Of these, for example, Hein (2012) reports that the most common trajectory for second-generation immigrants is direct entry into the labor market after completing schooling, because work gradually replaces studies as the primary activity. "It is not known what happens to the children of immigrants once they finish secondary education in Chile," Hein (p. 106) adds. In this way, studying the life trajectories (Cenobio-Narcizo et al., 2019; Elder & Johnson, 2002) is useful for understanding the transitions of non-traditional students by viewing the trajectory as an intersectional juxtaposition of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors that act in a mutually dependent, interactive, and cumulative manner.

Turning Points in Approaching Trajectory

Certain crossroads or bifurcations that may have marked a before and after in the subject (moving to a new country/city, family or personal events) are usually identified in the discourse to characterize a life trajectory. That is, changes in their career/life (valued as crises or that have motivated other subsequent developments) that have contributed to changing/turning their life trajectory, impacting the individual's conformation and decisions (Grebe et al., 2021). According to Bolívar (2017) and Moriña (2017), these turning points are defined as follows: (a) delimiting critical phases in which certain assumptions are questioned; (b) the appearance of critical people who have had an important influence on their narratives; (c) novel social aspects that mediate or impact upon changes in the subject's life; and (d) educational, professional, and institutional events (the life center).

Turning points, according to authors such as Grebe et al. (2021), are those moments in time that alter an individual's life trajectory and have their origins in various situations or events that occurred during training. These modifications or changes may differ between students. Some people adopt a new posture before an academic exercise, while others question their learning motivations, thus enabling the course of their lives to change (Terigi, 2014). In fact, telling stories incorporate this concept of change, referring to the itineraries and inflection points experienced by social actors in their interactions with so-called transition devices such as family, school, university, labor market, leisure spaces, and so on (Moriña (2017)).

The Macro, Meso, and Microstructures Model for the Study of Migrations

Several authors (Bravo & Betancourt, 2019; Fernández-Guzmán, 2012; Muñiz et al., 2015; Parella & Petroff, 2019; Sandín & Sánchez, 2014; Triandafyllidou et al., 2023) who address the migration phenomenon do so using a structure or level model. On one side, Muñiz et al. (2015) postulate three essential elements of study in their research on labor trajectories and careers of workers in the oil and textile sectors: a macro-social level, determined by the set of objective opportunities and structural limitations; a micro-social level, centered on the subjective experience of the actors; and a meso-social level, which consists of a sort of mediating space in between the two previous ones, for example: the workplace, family, or academic setting.

In this regard, Fernández-Guzmán (2012) proposes three structures for approaching the phenomenon in his studies on mass migration between Mexico and the United States: a macro-structure made up of the political-economic factors of the world order; a meso-structure made up of the "migration industry," such as recruitment organizations, travel agents, NGOs,

remittance houses, and so on; and a micro-structure, consolidated by the informal strategies and networks created by the migrants.

Linked to our study, Sandín and Sánchez (2014) present a descriptive-explanatory model of resilience in immigrant students and its three levels, delving deeper into this categorization. The first level of the model is the macro level, from which it is understood that these young people's educational development is framed in structural conditions related to the nature and (stable) circumstances that surround their life process: social and educational policies, migration regularization and integration processes, social segmentation, institutional cultures, and so on. The second level is the meso level, which refers to the contexts in which the person interacts with his or her surroundings. Contingent conditions (non-permanent, changing, and sometimes random) such as the family, the group of classmates, teachers, and friends, and workplace relationships, among others, can be decisive in young people's educational trajectories. Finally, at the micro level (self), the subject is defined by those individual elements that have emerged as more relevant in their life development, such as self-efficacy, pragmatism, optimism, or pessimism with which they approach challenges, decision-making, goal setting, expectations, and so on.

In short, the model of structures is consistent for exploring the lives of young immigrants and their long journey to improve their socio-economic conditions, their relationships, interactions, reflections, emotions and thoughts on how to achieve wellbeing.

Design and Approach

This Qualitative work is situated within a Constructionist paradigm (Clandinin, 2007) of social research because of its potential to re-signify the voices of the actors involved in the phenomenon. A case study is a qualitative research strategy used to examine in depth a particular phenomenon within its natural context. In this research the "case" refers to the entity being studied, particularly a group of eight young students. Also, in this Collective case design (Yin, 2014) all informants share a key characteristic: their status as young immigrants.

As a result, a Collective case study is used in conjunction with an approach based on a biographical-narrative inquiry (Bolívar, 2017; González-Alba et al., 2020; Moriña, 2017; Passeggi, 2020). The chosen approach makes it possible to elicit events, experiences, emotions, and reflections that, through the narrated story, form an intrinsic part of the way of telling/representing the situated reality. The social and the personal, through this special type of conversation, are narrated intertwined, producing (re)meanings of one's own image and concreteness of what has been experienced through the meaning that is imprinted on the reflections and experiences narrated.

Participants

Study participants (Table 1) were eight young Latin American immigrants studying at universities and professional institutes in Chile's Valparaíso Region. Regarding the selection criteria, this was intentional, non-random, and voluntary. For the selection process, we have contacted various authorities of universities and professional institutes in the region by email, which have called for the participation of immigrant students enrolled as regular students in technical and undergraduate courses.

Table 1
Characteristics of the Participants

Participants	MILE	MARI	EUG	GIN	VALE	ADRI	BRAN	GERA
Country of origin	Colombia	Colombia	Venezuela	Ecuador	Venezuela	Colombia	Venezuela	Venezuela
Age at time of study	22	21	19	28	18	19	18	18
Age at arrival in Chile	11	13	16	15	18	18	15	17
Family group	Boyfriend and son	Stepfather, mother, one older sister, and one Chilean brother	Father, mother, and one younger brother	Single	Mother, sister, brother-in-law, and one niece	Mother	Father, stepmother, and one younger sister	Mother, stepfather, aunt, and one younger brother
School career path	The complete secondary school was developed in Chile	The complete secondary school was developed in Chile	The last two levels of secondary education were developed in Chile	The last three levels of secondary education were developed in Chile	The school was developed in Venezuela. Admission to its current career is without PSU	The school was developed in Colombia. Admission to its current career is without PSU	The last two levels of secondary education were developed in Chile	One year of primary school is developed in Spain. Then high school and one year of engineering in Venezuela
Type of current educational institution	Private university	Public university	Private university with public funding	Private professional institute	Private professional institute	Private professional institute	Private professional institute	Private professional institute
Current career	Phonoaudiology	Tourism management	Philosophy pedagogy	Electrical and industrial automation engineering	Cybersecurity engineering	Risk prevention engineering	Cybersecurity engineering	Programmer analyst

Regarding the selection of the sample, the participants had to be enrolled as regular students in higher education institutions located in the Valparaíso Region. To participate in the study, all participants signed informed consent forms. Previously, the bioethics commissions of the University of Barcelona and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso approved this study, ensuring the ethical safeguards of research with human subjects. To identify the participants, the abbreviation of their names is used, which was duly authorized by them.

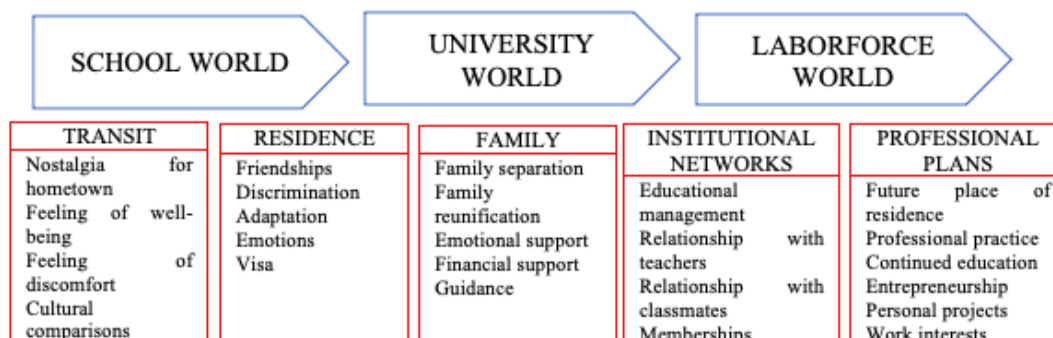
Data Collection Strategies

Once the sample was formed and the negotiation with the eight collaborators was completed, the data were collected using the following strategies: In-depth individual interviews and a collective construction of a lifeline.

(A) Interview Implementation Phase

The development of these activities required the researcher to travel to the students' places of study or residence. The first technique used corresponded specifically to a *Biographical-Narrative Interview* (Bolívar, 2017; González-Alba et al., 2020; Moríña, 2017). That is, a set of questions designed to encourage participants to converse, narrate, and reflect on – in this case – their educational experiences and goals. The discursive structure was designed around two axes: temporal and thematic. Regarding the former, the interactions were intended to project and generate stories and reflections throughout the educational trajectory (school-university-work world). Based on these, thematic axes were conceptualized for the design of this instrument, which was subsequently used for data collection. Figure 1 shows the convergence of these two discursive levels.

Figure 1.
Conceptualized Temporal-Thematic Axes for the Design of the Interview Structure



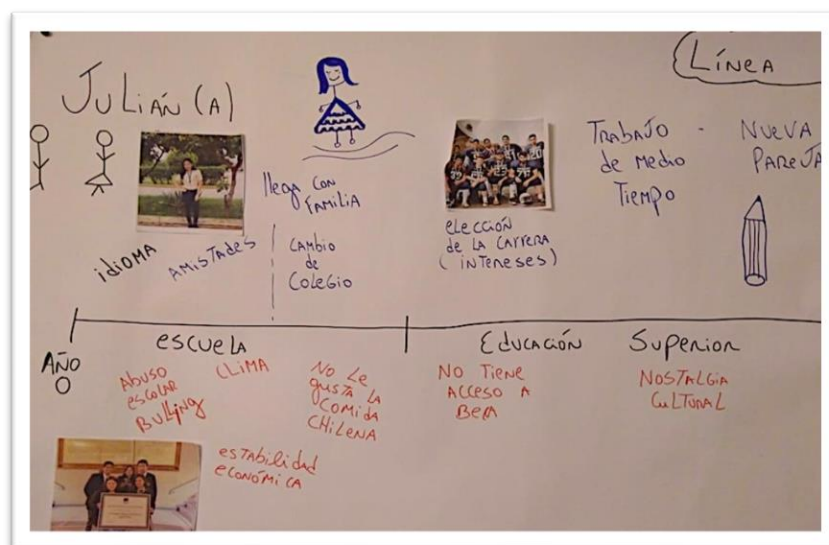
Note. Own elaboration

Concretely, this interview design was specifically planned to (re)generate meanings of what was lived through what had been imprinted on the experiences told through this special type of conversation (Moriña, 2017; Passeggi, 2020), which is incorporated as an appendix to this manuscript. The interviews were conducted by principal researcher in the Valparaíso Region of Chile after expert validation and piloting of the instrument with a young Latin American immigrant (resident in the city of Barcelona, Spain) with characteristics like those of the sample. These included an eighty-minute conversation in which each participant described their educational experiences, both in their countries of origin and in the host country. Participants also discussed their professional projects and expectations.

(B) Group Methodology Implementation Phase

Following that, a *Life-Line Construction Group Activity* (González-Alba et al., 2020; Guzmán-Benavente et al., 2022) was held, in which participants were invited to create stories and fictions that would allow them to narrate and reflect on the educational trajectory of Julián/a, a fictitious immigrant child who arrived in Chile.

Figure 2
Lifeline constructed in the discussion group (1st part of the whiteboard)

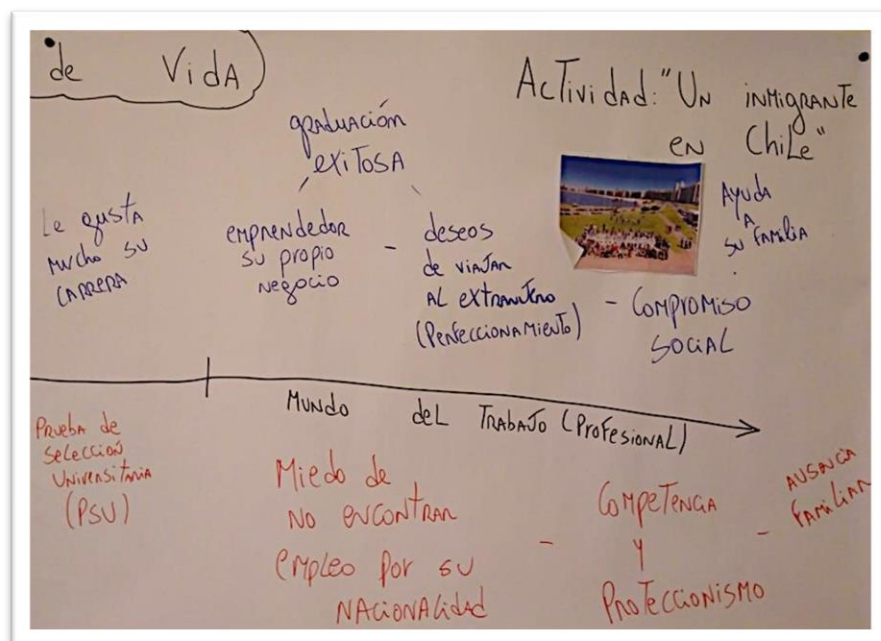


Note. Own elaboration, produced in the context of field work.

In this case, the goal was to construct imagined transitions chronologically through a playful and creative group activity (Figures 2 and 3), all with the goal of producing fictions and reflections on various migratory and educational topics that, for the most part, did not emerge in the interviews. The activity was carried out by the principal investigator and another researcher who supported the process. During the hour and a half activity, they were also able to share personal photos with each other and tell us about their lives as students and immigrants. The data collection was recorded in audio and visual format.

Figure 3

Lifeline constructed in the discussion group (2nd part of the whiteboard)



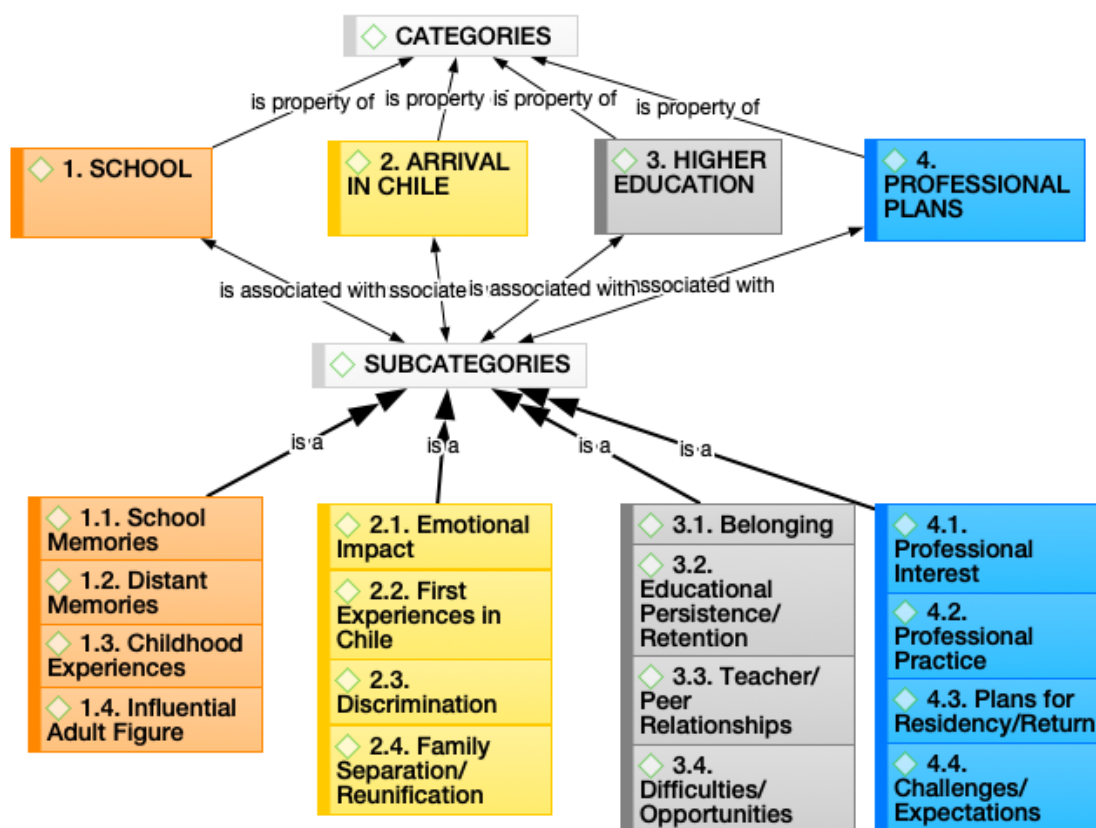
Note. Own elaboration, produced in the context of field work.

Data Analysis

To carry out the textual coding process, the entire textual corpus from the data collection was transcribed in order to identify and analyze the turning points and expectations that shape the educational transitions of the participants. For the cross-sectional analysis of the textual corpus, categorical systems were developed to classify the information and search for thematic affinities, which made it possible to reduce the data and present the results.

The authors of this study used the ATLAS.ti software (version 8.4.5) to create a hermeneutic unit for the coding process. In this way, the logics chosen during this phase of analysis of the textual corpus collected in the interviews and the focus group were applied. Here we chose an inter-case logic of analysis, which means that we codified all the transcribed material and ordered the meaning threads of all the stories around two interconnected categorical perspectives that cross them discursively (Muñiz-Terra, 2018): diachronic-temporal and synchronic-thematic, defined below.

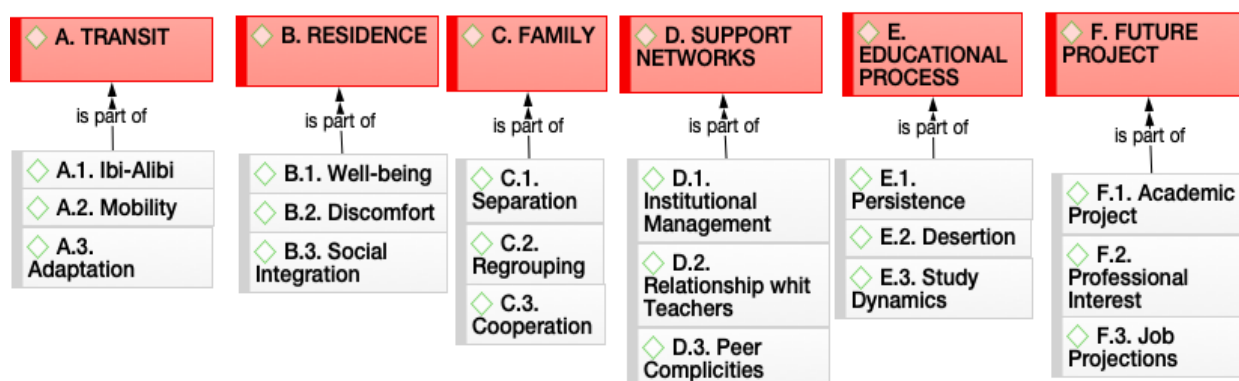
Figure 4
Diachronic-Temporal Categorical System



Note. Own elaboration using ATLAS.ti (version 8.4.5).

First, the entire textual corpus was coded, with data ordered chronologically by temporal categories and subcategories (Figure 4). Second, thematic categories and subcategories were identified (Figure 5) in order to code recurring narrative elements.

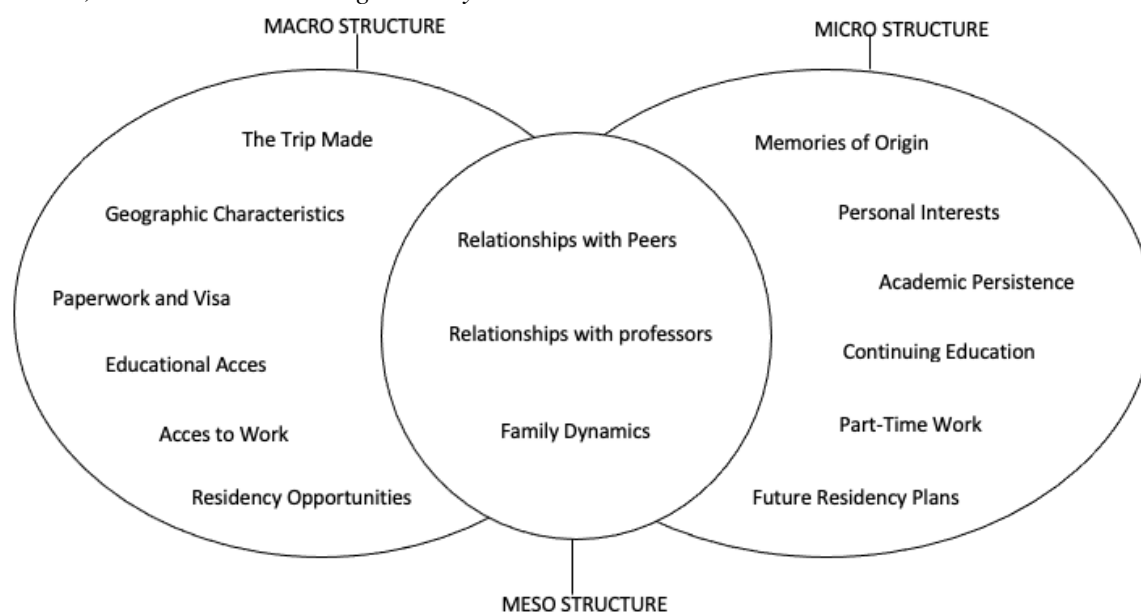
Figure 5
Synchronic-Thematic Categorical System



Note. Own elaboration using ATLAS.ti (version 8.4.5).

Finally, the structure categorical system (Figure 6) was used to code the constituent elements of the three macro, meso, and micro levels (Fernández-Guzmán, 2012; Sandín & Sánchez, 2014).

Figure 6
Macro, Meso and Micro Categorical System Structures



Notes. Own elaboration.

Concerning the first level, we codified, ordered, and analyzed the themes identified in the group's narratives pertaining to structural, institutional, and employment access dynamics. The second level is made up of social interactions that occur within the contexts of the family, school, and university. The third level is made up of elements from the individual's inner world: memories, interests, decisions, expectations, and future desires.

Results

We identify below the most significant turning points through the transitions to characterize the group's educational trajectory. We further discuss the obstacles and opportunities typical of their educational paths to approach an understanding of the inclusion-exclusion factors manifested in the narratives and discourses traced. By e-mail, the participants were contacted to choose the headings presented in the following sections, ordered according to the three structures indicated (see Figure 6).

Macro-Structural Level of Migration

“Because I Didn't Have My Visa up to Date, I Couldn't Get into University.”

The participants' discourses reveal several access barriers to post-compulsory schooling. Policy in Chile is that those who graduate from Chilean schools to postsecondary education must take the University Selection Test (*Prueba de Seleccion Universitaria*, PSU²), to be admitted to their respective universities. Some participants were able to do so through this way – as due them through their time in Chile, which allowed them to receive a permanent residence visa. Indeed, this legal formality is required to take this entrance exam, get scholarships, and participate in the free higher education system.

² University Selection Test (PSU) that, years ago, all students in Chile had to take when they graduated from high school to enter higher education.

The situation is different for those who completed their secondary education in their home nations. Because their visas were not up to date at the time of their arrival in Chile, they were unable to take this admission test (which is only given in December), and so were unable to enroll in the group of traditional colleges. This is how one of the participants recalls it, who has been living in Chile for a few months (I had recently arrived in Chile, and I was refused admission to various colleges because I did not take the PSU and did not have an up-to-date visa, and I was unable to register for classes; VALE.VENEZ³, 8:15).

“It’s Competing for Employment with Chileans.”

While participants visualized the set of opportunities across “Julian’s” migratory experience, these were not immune to the challenges inherent in such voyages. Numerous hurdles to employment were highlighted, including the impact of nationality on professional hiring and labor competitiveness with Chilean counterparts. Mile imagines several episodes of job competition in the search for work (On job sites, they always select a Chilean over a foreigner. We compete for jobs with Chileans. When you graduate from a university program, you will compete against other people who graduated from the same program and for the same employment. Being a foreigner in these situations is a disadvantage; GROUP, 1:119).

Their anxieties about joining the labor market are projected in the narratives, envisioning many scenarios involving visas, the role of nationality on access to jobs, and uneven competitiveness with their national counterparts. In relation to the latter, it is worthwhile to consider the *a priori* disadvantages that surround them because of their foreign nature when competing on equal terms with locals in the job search.

Meso Level of Social Interaction

“Go Back to Your Country – That’s What I’ve Been Told.”

The school environment is one of the initial venues of connection with the local culture, as stated by those who arrived directly to secondary school in Chile. These first interactions with their Chilean friends were not without incidents of racist bullying by their classmates. Several respondents described numerous instances of pain they had during their first years in Chile while in high school. Although this type of prejudice does not include physical violence, it does involve mocking, sarcasm, or unpleasant words.

The presence of the “other-outsider,” a radical figure of otherness in contrast to what is considered one’s own, can resonate in hatred and rejection by those who are considered their own by the receiving culture (Cabello-Valenzuela & Palominos, 2018; Pavez-Soto & Galaz-Valderrama, 2018). Thus, Mari reflects on an episode in which she was harassed by others because of her nationality (A student used to make all kinds of jokes about me, calling me Peruvian or Bolivian, and I told her I was Colombian. I told her not to call me that because it is not an insult to me. She insulted me about my nationality, and I had to live with that from eighth to twelfth grade. They knew at school, my mother knew, and I never fought back; MARI.COLOM, 6:9).

This type of discursive racism from locals reveals negative attitudes, opinions, and daily beliefs towards immigrants (van Dijk, 2016). That is, any act that contributes to the coercive dominance and subjection of the local population (endo-group) over minority (exo-group), with whom they share space. Finally, this sort of discursive violence manifests itself in the distinction that nationality signifies for their Chilean classmates with whom they share the

³ Abbreviations: informant - country of origin - speech register code

schoolroom. It should be noted that the people involved occasionally avoid disagreements of any kind, which “invisibilize” these types of circumstance.

“I Got out of High School and Then I Went to University, to the Program I Wanted.”

The support mechanisms obtained by members of the accompanying family nucleus, both at the school of origin and at the school of destination, are one of the impact elements that arise in the “school-university” transition.

For Adri, the idea of being able to support their families who have remained in their countries of origin, as well as the family nucleus that has joined them in Chile, was present in her fictions (Juliana is determined to assist her mother financially. She manages a five-star hotel and does quite well. She invests her earnings in Colombia and helps her family to overcome their difficulties... Because the rest of her family is in Colombia, she is in a difficult position because she cannot accompany or be with them; GROUP, 1:15).

Along with the family group’s experiences of cooperation in the processes of integration to the new context of residence, their narratives also allude to the presence of various institutional welcome mechanisms (Jiménez-Vargas, 2022; Valdés-Morales et al., 2019) while attending Chilean school, including the vocational guidance provided by their high school teachers (The instructor in charge of the student center at school pushed me to look for a job where I could organize people. He informed me I had all the aptitudes for management and administration and encouraged me to pursue the position I am now in; MARI.COLOM, 6:30).

As can be seen, various forms of cooperation and academic guidance by family members and their teachers (González-Monteagudo & Zamora-Serrato, 2019; Tinto, 2017) account for the influence of the adult figure in this educational stage, which is linked to the integration processes during the childhood and adolescent life cycles.

Micro-Interior Level of the Subject

“I Don’t Know if I Will return to My Country, and I Doubt It Very Much.”

Many of the recollections generated by the group of participants contain feelings of cultural nostalgia, as evidenced by their evaluations and memories of their places of origin and longing for their culture. Thus, when people recollect their origins, they etch upon themselves a life between two worlds, the experience of being there and being here (Boos & Salvucci, 2018).

However, it is also observed that none of them wish to return to their native surroundings, noting that they have conquered numerous problems, adapted to the new culture, made new friends, and are already planning their future. EUG's accounts show his willingness to reside in Chile (I am not sure if I would go back to my country, and I doubt it since it is like if once you reside here, you start thinking from here. Personally, I believe I would not return because you begin to take root; EUG.VENEZ, 5:63).

Thus, when exploring their personal, work, and academic projects (Romero et al., 2019; Villar-Aguilés, 2017), their future expectations are diverse and varied: helping their families financially, developing their professional practices in a place with job projection, carrying out entrepreneurship in Chile, owning housing, continuing education, job searches, and so on.

“Juliana Graduated with Good Grades from High School but Did Poorly on the PSU.”

Our participants' key goals, as expressed in their experiences, were access to higher education, academic options, study strategies, and speedy graduation. Those who arrived in Chile and were unable to study at traditional universities due to failing the PSU chose to study at professional institutes.

Consequently, Vale opts to enroll in an educational institute (offering technical careers) that opens its doors to her despite the irregularities of her immigration status (I arrived in Chile without any documents and without a PSU. So, when I arrived at National Professional Training Institute [INACAP], they informed me: we will offer you the opportunity while your papers are being reviewed, and your degree will be verified later. That is exactly what I did; VALE.VENEZ, 8:16).

Once in their university programs, the mechanisms and periods of personal study indicated in their narratives reveal their concerns regarding their ability to balance academic commitments with personal space. In this manner, they emphasize the significance of time allocation and management for academic success (Julian enrolled in college, assuming he will graduate in five years; GROUP.BRAN, 1:20).

Similarly, timely graduation is viewed by participants as a crucial component of the defined requirements. In this regard, according to Lent et al. (2017), a student feels content when they believe they are competent in what they are doing and know that they will receive benefits by doing it, by committing to the growth of a task, and if they also have the required support.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this research have brought us closer to clarifying, on the one hand, the impact of social structures, interaction, and the subject's inner world. On the other hand, it has allowed us to clarify the opportunities and obstacles faced by the participants as they have progressed through their educational transitions.

First and foremost, by beginning with the difficulties identified in the defined trajectories, the research of this set of narratives has made visible some dynamics of discrimination associated to nationality that are formed by locals during the Chilean school stage. Although this type of harassment and rejection does not take the form of physical assault, it does take the shape of mockery or negative comments directed at “the other.” According to this viewpoint, certain Chilean youngsters display hatred against migrant children, which occurs during the school context, a critical time for the child's growth and social integration (Riedemann & Stefoni, 2015). It is precisely during the school stage, when the life course intersects with an important moment of identity construction and growth, that their personal maturity perspective is configured (Elder & Johnson, 2002).

Certainly, the stage of childhood development is an undeniable fact that influences the subject's options for action and the configuration of his or her world; however, it is debatable to reduce the phenomenon of contemporary childhood development and its link to racist discourse to the set of maturational elements of this stage of the human life cycle without taking into account the importance of the social, cultural, and political dimensions (Pavez-Soto & Galaz-Valderrama, 2018; Tijoux & Córdova, 2015).

The presence of an influential adult figure is given as a protector of considerable inclusive impact on the school transitions of the participants in this educational cycle. In this view, the nuclear family, as a meso-structure, proves to be a critical component of support and cooperation for the student during his or her learning process and assimilation into the new cultural area. Authors such as González-Monteagudo and Zamora-Serrato (2019) argue

teachers are an important source of nourishing their goals, vocational assistance, and substantial effect in their imaginary, on the socio-educational universe through which the student-immigrant transitions.

Regarding the “higher education-labor force world” transition, on the one hand, the participants emphasize the necessity of timely graduation from their occupations at the appropriate moment, as well as the opportunities for residence in Chile, in their inner world. On the other hand, many express concerns about the difficulties of obtaining a job once they complete their careers, owing to their foreign background and the rivalry in the labor market that protects the local citizen. Regarding the latter, it is appropriate to consider the Macro-structure that comprises the “Dual System of national markets,” which, according to Fernández-Guzmán (2012), is composed of two levels with opposing rules and independent and unequal characteristics: a lower and precarious one for foreign workers; and a higher, highly qualified one with good working conditions for local workers.

It is concluded from the narratives presented that entry to tertiary education is one of the major challenges for immigrant students. Considering this, the institutions of higher learning may come to function as protective entities of young immigrants’ educational transitions, not only providing them with disciplinary knowledge and technical-professional credentials, but also generating inclusion devices to allow these students to integrate into the new contexts of the host country.

As can be seen, the analysis of transitions (Cano-Hila et al., 2016; Cenobio-Narcizo et al., 2019; Faulkner et al., 2022; Hein, 2012; Terigi, 2014) through narrative work with turning points is extremely useful for interpreting the coping, adjustment, and persistence processes that young people have developed during their educational trajectories as a space where a good portion of the dilemmas related to social insertion are settled (Tarrés-Vallespí, 2018).

We highlight the importance of various elements in students' lives such as motivation, adaptive readiness and predictability, with the hypothesis that the meanings given to the anticipation of a transition and its potential changes increase the possibilities of planning and academic-professional success (Romero et al., 2019; Villar-Aguilés, 2017). Thus, this study aims to provide theoretical and methodological tools for researchers and professionals interested in understanding the dynamics that revolve around persistence and educational retention in school and university contexts.

It is important to point out that although it was not within our study purposes to seek a sample with pretensions of statistical generalization, we value its representative character, which is born from the discourses and subjectivities in a historical and geographical context such as the Valparaíso Region that, traditionally, has not been approached by those who investigate the intraregional phenomena of immigration and its impact on education.

Among the limitations, it was not possible to include students of Peruvian and Haitian origin; in the first case, all those contacted stated that they were studying and working full time, which left them no room for eventual participation. In the second case, their low age made it difficult to include them in the data collection activities. Future work may look to enrich the literature with case studies on other underrepresented groups - such as natives or Haitians youths (an immigrant population with a major presence in the current Chilean environment) – to significantly increase the development of knowledge about issues such as access to labor, culture shock, and linguistic acquisition.

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