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# ÁNFORA

Cognitive Sciences: Towards a Cross-cultural Perspective



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# EDITORIAL

## Cognitive Sciences. Intercultural Perspective

Ciencias Cognitivas. Perspectiva intercultural

Ciências Cognitivas. Perspectiva intercultural

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## Abstract

In this editorial of the monograph in *Cognitive Sciences: Towards a Cross-cultural Perspective*, a thematic review is presented, which accounts for the object of study, disciplines that underpin the interdisciplinary field of problems, and some current lines of research emerging in the field of study, among which four lines of work stand out. Firstly, studies linking cognitive or neurocognitive variables to the challenge of social diversity; secondly, studies examining the effect of cognition and neurophysiology on the formation of social stereotypes, gender; as well as on processes of discrimination or social and cultural inclusion; thirdly, works on the relationship between cognition and rurality; and finally, research that, from educational and social spheres, seeks to reconfigure the personal experience of social processes such as violence and territorial

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uprooting, towards new narratives of personal and social experience, which contribute to the sense of life of the individual and their community, as experiences that, although painful, can contribute to the relationship between memory and history.

**Keywords:** Cognitive sciences; cognition; emotion; culture; rurality; violence; personal experience.

## Resumen

En la presente editorial del monográfico en *Ciencias cognitivas: hacia una perspectiva intercultural*, se presenta una revisión del tema que da cuenta del objeto de estudio, disciplinas que fundamentan el campo interdisciplinario de problemas, y de algunas líneas actuales de investigación que emergen en el campo de estudio; entre las que se destacan cuatro líneas de trabajo. Una primera, con estudios que vinculan variables cognitivas o neurocognitivas frente al reto de la diversidad social; en una segunda línea están los estudios que presenta el efecto de cognición y de la neurofisiología sobre la configuración de estereotipos sociales de género; así como sobre procesos de discriminación o inclusión social y cultural. En una tercera línea de trabajo, se ubican los trabajos sobre la relación entre cognición y ruralidad; y, finalmente, en una cuarta línea de estudio estarían investigaciones que, desde los ámbitos educativos y sociales, buscan reconfigurar la experiencia personal de procesos sociales como la violencia y el desarraigo del territorio, hacia nuevas narrativas de la experiencia personal y social, las cuales sumen al sentido de vida de la persona y de su comunidad como experiencias que, aunque dolorosas, puedan contribuir a la relación entre memoria e historia.

**Palabras clave:** Ciencias cognitivas; cognición; emoción; cultura; ruralidad, violencia, experiencia personal.

## Resumo

Nesta editorial do monográfico em *Ciências cognitivas: rumo a uma perspectiva transcultural*, é apresentada uma revisão temática que aborda o objeto de estudo, disciplinas que fundamentam o campo interdisciplinar de problemas e algumas linhas de pesquisa atuais que emergem no campo de estudo, entre as quais se destacam quatro linhas de trabalho. Primeiramente, estudos que relacionam variáveis cognitivas ou neurocognitivas ao desafio da diversidade social; em segundo lugar, estudos que

examinam o efeito da cognição e da neurofisiologia na formação de estereótipos sociais, de gênero; assim como em processos de discriminação ou inclusão social e cultural; em terceiro lugar, trabalhos sobre a relação entre cognição e ruralidade; e, finalmente, pesquisas que, das esferas educacionais e sociais, buscam reconfigurar a experiência pessoal de processos sociais como a violência e o desenraizamento territorial, rumo a novas narrativas de experiência pessoal e social, que contribuem para o sentido de vida do indivíduo e de sua comunidade, como experiências que, embora dolorosas, podem contribuir para a relação entre memória e história.

**Palavras-chave:** Ciências cognitivas; cognição; emoção; cultura; ruralidade; violência; experiência pessoal.

## Presentation Overview

One of the most significant current challenges for humans is probably the enormous challenge of knowing, regulating, and making processes of introspection and reflection. This allows them to have a greater awareness of themselves, others, and the world around them. In the context of an era in which cognitive diversity is beginning to be recognized in terms of learning preferences and beyond that, in terms of a knowing subject —mediating by its social, cultural, anthropological diversities, etc.— it is from the impact that it is recognized that all these variables can have in the face of their possible structural and functional configurations at the brain, cognitive and emotional levels. For this reason, the approach to the mind-brain relationship, brain cognition, or, more recently, brain emotion seems to take the form of a multi-causal and, in essence, multidisciplinary problem.

Thus, sciences that by tradition have studied the problem of the mind and consciousness, such as psychology, understood as the Science of the spirit, or philosophy, understood as the Science of love for wisdom (knowledge), cease to be some of the fields of expertise that address the problem of the mind in isolation, as, given the complexity of this object of study, a more interdisciplinary and intercultural approach seems necessary; context in which the contributions of cognitive sciences arise.

From this perspective, cognitive sciences can be considered the sum of the developments generated in different disciplines, including psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy, which have

led to unifying ideas around the concepts of 'mind' and 'intelligence' (García, 1991; Gardner, 1987; Medina, 2008; Thagar, 2010).

Cognitive sciences are interested in the study of the effect of different factors or variables on the performance of cognitive processes since it has been considered that this set of disciplines, which are grouped under the category of Cognitive Sciences, are defined as fields of knowledge and problem areas that are nourished, in an interdisciplinary perspective, by all the branches above of knowledge, and that attempt to determine how brain functioning gives rise to mental activity.

Certain types of problems are of interest to researchers who work with the cognitive sciences: issues about the mind, thinking, and mental representation (García, 1991), consciousness, mental operations, learning strategies, and problem-solving (Thagar, 2010). As well as the effort to explain human knowledge and the type of means people use to embark on projects that allow them to achieve their goals, represent, organize, and outline action plans and provisional outlines in light of the feedback offered by others to determine if their course of action has come to fruition or if they should start a new line of work (Gardner, 1987).

In general, it is recognized that the development of Cognitive Sciences becomes a double tension, first, between a representationalist tendency, oriented to study the problems of information processing at the level of biological and computational systems in a connectionist perspective, and second, in an emerging interdisciplinary trend, according to which cognitive scientists are interested in examining knowledge problems that involve the integrated work of several disciplines in a multidisciplinary perspective. This approach has led to unifying ideas about constructs such as the mind, consciousness, intelligence, and executive functions (Thagar, 2005, 2012) and the ability of the human being to plan, monitor, and evaluate objectives and, if necessary, establish a new course of action (Gardner, 1987; Varela, 2005).

According to Estany (2013), the effort of some of the researchers in the fields of study of cognitive sciences has focused on a double line of work: first, on the development of the theory of knowledge, the formation, representation, storage, and retrieval of information, in its condition of the representational character of knowledge, in general, and of science in particular; while, in a second sense, cognitive sciences have been interested in studying the unity of cognition related to the problem of agency capacity, in the sense of addressing the study of a cognitive agent capable of being self-descriptive and/or self-evaluating (Estany, 2013; Proust, 2010).

The monograph presented in this issue of *Ánfora* seeks to integrate the efforts of some researchers in Cognitive Sciences from an intercultural perspective. Its purpose is to offer the journal's readers and the academic community



an updated view of the study problem and new research trends, with particular emphasis on comparing cultural and social differences.

This monographic issue includes 13 articles addressing different cognitive science problems.

In the first line of work, some articles report on the challenge of addressing cognitive or neurocognitive variables in the face of social, cultural, and ethnographic diversity and their inclusion in educational and social contexts. Among these are works such as Restrepo, Niño, and Robledo's proposal on the naturalization of basic philosophical concepts of interculturality and the proposal of the neurocognitive model 'Elemental Intercultural Footprint' for the analysis of different cognitive variables, which included elements of analysis such as consciousness, self-control, identity, social mind, alterity, and morality. Partial epistemological trespass and methodological asymmetry were found to be the most common mechanisms for the naturalization of intercultural components.

In this same line of approach, the work of Gil, Herrera, and Guerrero on "Perceptions of Typhology in Colombia in the Context of Inclusive Education: Insights from Blind Individuals and Typhlogists" is presented, in which it is pointed out that there is no official profile for a country like Colombia that from the Ministry of National Education establishes the field of action, characteristics, and specific functions, nor a professionalization of the work of the typhlogist. This means that any professional with a minimum of experience in the educational process accompanies the visually impaired population, accompaniment that is sometimes carried out without having the minimum skills to provide a higher quality inclusive education.

In this same perspective is the work presented by Ramírez and Restrepo on "Inclusive Higher Education. A Review with Tree of Science", in which, through a systematic review methodology, three emerging subfields were found: 1) the factors that influence the consolidation of more inclusive education, 2) the inclusion of students with disabilities between barriers and opportunities, and 3) the implications for the consolidation of more inclusive higher education practices. To this end, it is recommended that training spaces be created on the understanding of inclusive education and the practices that derive from it.

This same line of interest includes the work provided by Granados and Alvarez on "Task Regulation and Communication of High and Low-performing Groups during the Execution of Collaborative Tasks", which addressed how social regulation processes, peer interaction, collaboration, and mutual support can affect students' academic performance. High-performing groups at the graduate level were found to have task regulation and communication characteristics that could aid in understanding academic success and developing genuinely collaborative tasks.

Likewise, a second line of analysis includes other studies that address the effect of cognition and neurophysiology on the configuration of social stereotypes, gender, and processes of discrimination or social and cultural inclusion. Among these are the contributions of Gómez, Amézquita, and Pineda, who addressed the “Face Recognition and Cultural Variability: Analysis of Empirical Evidence and Evaluation Measures”. A study confirmed that both neurophysiology and cultural factors play a crucial role in facial recognition and suggests that the “other-race effect” (ORE) may be a product of the interaction between these factors.

Likewise, in this same group of works, the contributions of authors such as Safranoff and Tiravassi can be found in their study on “Diversity in Adversity: Exploring the Differential Impact of Gender in the Contexts of Incarceration in Argentina”. In this article, the effects that the experiences of incarceration manifest in women within prison contexts in Argentina were addressed, and it was found that there are gender differences in the impact of confinement *inside*, which are crystallized mainly in the behavior of nearby containment networks.

As another of the lines of approach in the monograph, some studies address the relationship between cognition and rurality, among which Suárez and Tobón's research on “Bio-learning Based on Community Experiences in a Rural Territory of Colombia” is presented. The importance of learning experiences is recognized, where bio-learning emerges from community participation. This study thus recognizes that community training processes support the learning community, focused on vital training in, from, and for life, and having as a starting point the autochthonous, the cultural, the customs; what is shared from the territory and has been called ‘learning community spirit’.

In this same line of study are works such as that of García, “Conceptions of Childhood in the Initial Training of Teachers: A Phenomenological Research Conducted in the Higher Normal Schools of the Department of Caldas, Colombia”. It delves into the meaning of these conceptions from the life experiences of teachers, who reflect the reduction of childhood to a developmental stage in their professional practice. The sense of experiences linked to constructing specific conceptions in teachers' cognition is built from their childhood. This highlights the theoretical gaps in teacher training regarding the cultural shift of contemporary childhoods.

In this perspective, there is also the study by López, Durango, León, and Delgado, “Public Policies as Mechanisms for Peacebuilding in Territories”, which investigates how political capacities are developed for transitions in the territories based on democratic mediations of social conflicts oriented towards reconciliation and the construction of stable and lasting peace. From this, it was found that public policies acquire a peaceful nature, as they involve nonviolent forms of social

interaction. With them, those involved seek to achieve the highest possible level of well-being depending on the resources and contexts in which they are found.

A fourth line of study is the effort made by the educational and social fields to work together to reconfigure the personal experience of social processes, such as violence and the uprooting of the territory, towards new narratives of individual and social experience. These add to the meaning of life of the person and their community as experiences that, although painful, can contribute to the relationship between memory and history to enhance the possibilities of human development and, especially, the process of self-construction from pain. In addition to how, from their condition as social beings, they contributed to the development of their community, among which works such as Pradilla and Méndez “Fables from Memory: Reconstruction of Collective Memory through Literary Creation”, in which authors found that spaces for reading, dialogue, writing, and creation, such as “the creative writing workshop”, are indispensable for the reconstruction of a collective memory that seeks truth, forgiveness, and peace.

In this same sense, there is the work carried out by Rodríguez-Ávila, Barboza, Hernández, and Klimenko on the “Social Representations of the *Corralejas* Tragedy of January 20, 1980, Sincelejo, Colombia”, in which the tragedy was approached from categories that emerged in the analysis: premonitions or presentiments, popular stories and legends, selective rain, human-animal interaction, funerary aspects and cemeteries; and, finally, the central image associated with death, pain and trauma. The study revealed a social analysis of tragedy based on the concretion of magical thinking, which sought non-rational and less stigmatizing explanations of a tradition that clashes with Modernity.

In the same perspective, there is the work contributed by Carmona, Vanegas, and Jiménez on “Creative Writing as a Form of Psychosocial Mediation: A Bet from the Sociocultural Vision of Human Cognition”, in which creative writing is recognized as a tool for psychosocial mediation and as a space to enhance cognitive skills. From these, the realities experienced by young people are interpreted through the stories created in “the writing workshop”, oriented within the framework of the project “Weaving political capacities for transitions in the territories”, in Ovejas, Sucre. It was found that creative writing is assumed to boost the cognitive resources that make social interaction possible and is configured as a space to find in the meeting a possibility to transcend conflicts.

In this line is also the work contributed by Busquier on “Methodological Reflections from the Souths: Contributions to a Feminist and Decolonial Methodology”. Work in which the methodological work is reflected, especially around the research that takes as “subjects of study” subaltern, racialized, and colonized groups, which historically were invisible and hidden in academic

research, the product of acts of epistemic violence, epistemic extractivism and discursive colonialism; which leads to having to rethink how knowledge is constructed in the Latin American and Caribbean academic field.

Thus, it can be considered that this monograph constitutes a solid compilation of research efforts, which, from the approach to a common problem, such as the relationship between brain-cognition-emotion seeks to provide its contributions, different perspectives from the individual and social dimension, and beyond, in an intercultural perspective; different contributions in the process of recognizing that human cognition is not a uniform and homogenizing process and that on the contrary, multiple interdisciplinary, and multicultural approaches are identified in it, which allow more comprehensive approaches about the nature and implications of cognition in general, and of cognitive processes, in particular, within the framework of concrete and changing social and historical context, following the developments of the time and the emergence of the new millennium.

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# Bio-learning Based on Community Experiences in a Rural Territory of Colombia\*

[English version]

Bioaprendizajes gestados desde las experiencias  
comunitarias en un territorio rural de Colombia

Bioaprendizagem baseada em experiências  
comunitárias em uma área rural da Colômbia

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Colombia

## Abstract

**Objective:** To base bio-learning on community experiences in a rural territory of Colombia. **Methodology:** A socio-critical paradigm, qualitative approach, and Critical

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Participatory Action Research (CPAR) method. Instruments were a sociodemographic survey, focal groups, semi-structured individual interviews and learning experiences. The instruments were supported by the sociodemographic sheet, focal groups and interview scripts, planning of learning experiences, and observation sheets. The work unit was 51 community families, six teachers, 29 students, six community-linked external agents and one research professor for a total of 195 participants. **Results:** In Cycle I Problematization, the disconnection of the school from the community was recognized due to the lack of recognition of ancestral local knowledge from the culture, customs, and traditions of the community. Cycle II Communitization was implemented to enable the solution of those problems. It was based on three learning experiences related to coffee as the main product of the rural territory. As a result, community-related processes such as the construction of peasant and school knowledge supported by processes of community bio-learning were found to provide an ideographic vision of communitization. The community is constructed in a shared pedagogical environment in which bio-community learners interact as part of a bio-learning community to solve the needs of communitization and project bio-learning. **Conclusions:** Customs have not passed from generation to generation; neither daily life activities nor the value of bio-learning are being exploited. The learning spaces can be found in everyday life, in nature, or in the rural territory itself; hence, the importance of learning experiences from community participation-based bio-learning. The bio-learning community is recognized as supported by community training processes in, from, and for life. It takes the indigenous, cultural, customs, what is shared from the territory, and what has been referred to as the community spirit of bio-learning as its starting point.

**Key words:** Learning; bio-learning; rural territory; community experiences; learning experiences; bio-community (obtained from the UNESCO and ERIC thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** gestar bioaprendizajes desde las experiencias comunitarias en un territorio rural de Colombia. **Metodología:** paradigma sociocrítico, enfoque cualitativo y método de Investigación Acción Participativa Crítica (IAPC), utilizando como técnicas la encuesta sociodemográfica, grupos focales, entrevistas individuales semiestructuradas y experiencias de aprendiencia. Cada uno con sus respectivos instrumentos, ficha sociodemográfica, guion de grupos focales, guion de entrevistas, planeación de las experiencias de aprendiencia y fichas de observación. La unidad de trabajo estuvo conformada por 51 familias de la comunidad, seis enseñantes, 29 estudiantes aprendientes, seis agentes externos vinculados a la comunidad y una enseñante investigadora, para un total de 195 personas. **Resultados:** en el ciclo I



de problematización, se reconoció como principal problemática la desvinculación de la escuela con la comunidad debido a la falta de reconocimiento de los saberes ancestrales, locales, desde la cultura, costumbres y tradiciones comunitarias. El ciclo II de comunitarización se aplicó para posibilitar la solución de las problemáticas encontradas, a partir de tres experiencias de aprendencia relacionadas con el café como producto principal del territorio rural. En consecuencia, se encontró que los procesos comunitarios relacionados mediados por la construcción de saberes campesinos articulados a los conocimientos escolares, agenciados por procesos de formación comunitaria bioaprendiente, brindan una visión ideográfica de comunitarización. Lo comunitario se construye en un espacio pedagógico compartido en el que interactúan los aprendientes biocomunitarios, en una relación de pertenencia a la comunidad bioaprendiente, para dar solución a las necesidades de comunitarización y generar una proyección de aprendizaje bioaprendiente. **Conclusiones:** no se han transmitido las costumbres de generación en generación; tampoco se están aprovechando las actividades cotidianas, elementos valiosos para la gestación de bioaprendizajes, dado que estos espacios de aprendencia se pueden dar desde la cotidianidad, desde lo natural, en el propio territorio rural. Por ello, la importancia de las experiencias de aprendencia en donde desde la participación comunitaria se gestan bioaprendizajes. Se reconoce que la comunidad bioaprendiente se sustenta por procesos de formación comunitaria, es decir, la formación vital en, desde y para la vida, teniendo como punto de partida lo autóctono, lo cultural, las costumbres, lo que se comparte desde el territorio, lo que se ha denominado como espíritu comunitario bioaprendiente.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje; bioaprendizaje; territorio rural; experiencias comunitarias; experiencias de aprendizaje; biocomunidad (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO y ERIC).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** gerar bioaprendizagem por meio de experiências comunitárias em uma região rural da Colômbia. **Metodologia:** adotou-se o paradigma sociocrítico, uma abordagem qualitativa, e o método de Pesquisa de Ação Participativa Crítica (CPRAR). Para isso, foram utilizadas diversas técnicas, tais como pesquisa sociodemográfica, grupos focais, entrevistas individuais semiestruturadas e experiências de aprendizagem. Cada uma dessas técnicas foi acompanhada de seus respectivos instrumentos, incluindo ficha sociodemográfica, roteiros para grupos focais e entrevistas, planejamento das experiências de aprendizagem, bem como fichas de observação. A unidade de trabalho

foi composta por 51 famílias da comunidade, seis professores, 29 alunos, 6 agentes externos vinculados à comunidade e 1 professor-pesquisador, totalizando 195 pessoas. **Resultados:** no primeiro ciclo de problematização, identificou-se como principal questão a desconexão entre a escola e a comunidade, resultante da falta de reconhecimento do conhecimento ancestral e local da cultura, dos costumes e das tradições comunitárias. O Ciclo II de comunitarização foi então aplicado para abordar esses problemas, com base em três experiências de aprendizagem relacionadas ao café, principal produto do território rural. Como resultado, observou-se que os processos comunitários, mediados pela integração do conhecimento camponês com o conhecimento escolar e conduzidos por meio de treinamentos comunitários em bioaprendizagem, proporcionam uma visão ideográfica da comunitarização. A comunidade é assim estabelecida como um espaço pedagógico compartilhado, onde os alunos da biocomunidade interagem em um ambiente de pertencimento à comunidade de bioaprendizagem, visando oferecer soluções para as necessidades de comunitarização e promover um ciclo contínuo de aprendizagem em bioaprendizagem. **Conclusões:** evidenciou-se a interrupção na transmissão de costumes de geração em geração, assim como a subutilização das atividades cotidianas como elementos valiosos para o desenvolvimento da bioaprendizagem. Tais espaços de aprendizagem podem ser facilmente criados a partir da vida cotidiana e da interação com a natureza, dentro do próprio contexto do território rural. Destaca-se, portanto, a importância das experiências de aprendizagem que promovem a bioaprendizagem por meio da participação ativa da comunidade. Reconhece-se que a comunidade de bioaprendizagem é sustentada por processos de formação comunitária, caracterizados por uma educação vital na, da e para a vida, centrada nos aspectos indígenas, culturais e nos costumes compartilhados no território. Este fenômeno foi denominado de "espírito comunitário de bioaprendizagem".

**Palavras chave:** Aprendizagem; bioaprendizagem; território rural; experiências comunitárias; experiências de aprendizagem; biocomunidade (extraído do tesouro da UNESCO e do ERIC).

## Introduction

This article is part of the research carried out within the framework of the Doctorate in Education of the Catholic University of Manizales to generate bio-learning from community experiences in La Eureka, Huila, Colombia. It aims to strengthen learning through the link between the curricular knowledge of the school and the knowledge owned by community actors (henceforth referred to as bio-learning). This promotes the recognition of the culture, traditions, relationships, and experiences in the territory, through community experiences of learning from everyday life.

The rural territory is the stage for promoting community experiences. They enable social practice in connection with the school, where learners achieve bio-learning to improve their reality. For Fals Borda (cited by López, 2006) the territory is not understood only as a geographical area, but as a symbolic place of interactions between the members of the community and collective actions in the house lived in. Escobar (2014) explains that the territory constitutes the axis in the constitution of the world; it includes the land and its ecosystems, as well as the processes of territorialization that based identities and appropriations. This means that territory is a “life project,” according to Romero (2012) is a territory that covers rural areas and rurality as well as new rural areas.

In rural areas, promoting community experiences through learning experiences as a process based on meeting others and relating school knowledge to their own community knowledge is vital. Building knowledge is only possible to the extent that the school is linked to the rural context from the reality of the learners, a knowledge of what has been lived and inspired in the future of living (Contreras & Pérez, 2010). The project aims to foster bio-learning in students within a time and a space, from their vital niches, interactions with the community and the environment, and understanding that essential and cognitive processes are similar (Assmann, 2002). Critical experiences promote personal and collective transformations and participants building their own learning (Woods, 1998).

Parra et al. (2019) state that one learns in, from, and for life, from networks of interaction with others and with the environment. Bio-learning as a possibility for developing the condition of humanity for those who learn is to self-organize, to have new knowledge, and transform it into their daily lives. Gutiérrez (2010), states that promoting learning experiences allows the learner to learn in life itself with joy, and from their own interests.

In the state of art, researchers refer to community experiences; their epistemological approach is the socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous peoples, the community art experiences, community participation, school contents,

student roots, families, field education, local knowledge, and community education (Pérez & Cárdenas, 2020; Bolaños, 2021; Matei et al., 2022). Research has shown that the core fields of study are families, local knowledge, rural schools, and community engagement. The problematic issues in these publications refer to the gap between the school and its contents with the communities, and the proposals that are woven create projects that articulate local knowledge with the lessons learned from the rural school curriculum.

Research articles regarding bio-learning approach the perspectives of emotional education, learning for life, and narratives, among others (Funke, 2020). Ocaña and Reyes (2019) also involved musical experiences in the training of social identities in their qualitative research. Takeuchi et al. (2020), from a qualitative analysis, state that teachers demonstrate shared behavior through the exchange of knowledge with their peers and improve organizational capacities and teamwork. Teachers must create environments in which to share knowledge, complement that knowledge with new technologies, and establish relationships to foster teachers' learning and strengthen students' learning.

Those created environments must establish a close connection with the community and their rural territory to base solid and meaningful learning. Vera (2019) reveals that the rural school must relate community and territory for the memories, connections, and life experiences that are of great value, recover and put them in a new perspective from the school that demands to be territorialized.

The current rural school has pros and cons to understand as it is intended to conduct research in these educational spaces, mainly in rural areas of the country. González et al. (2020) point out that the teaching reality and the rural schools have weaknesses but also strengths when the State provides resources, facilities, and little or no training to this type of institution.

Based on this, that the related findings were able to respond satisfactorily to the research question can be inferred. The question posed seeks to generate community experiences by enabling bio-learning in the community of La Eureka, in the rural territory of Tarqui in the department of Huila.

In this way, this article contains several sections, such as the methodology, constructed from the socio-critical paradigm, the qualitative approach and the CPAR method. It aims to improve the life realities of the bio-learning community through two cycles: problematization and communitization. These cycles allow the recognition of needs and the development of community experiences through bio-learning in this rural territory.

## Methodology

From a socio-critical perspective, daily practices from the realities of rural lives, or agricultural participants, in the community of La Eureka in the municipality of Tarqui, Huila, are especially valued. In this way, research is created and develops socio-critically by being participatory, community-based, and emerging from the problems of the actors involved in the research (Habermas, 1986). Therefore, the building of knowledge is based on the popular knowledge owned by the people of the community.

A qualitative analysis enabled community interaction between families, students, teachers, community members, external actors sporadically involved, managers, and research teachers. In other words, the analysis intended to create a fabric between the school and the community to build bio-learning from the realities of the context. From this point of view, Bonilla and Rodríguez (2005) argue that the analysis is research based on the relationships of community participants, developed inductively from their realities.

The research methodology was carried out based on the Critical Participative Action Research method proposed by Kemmis et al. (2014). It links both social and educational issues and enables the participation of all actors involved in the research. Community training and improvement work was conducted based on the realities of the participants, from the actions of transformation that the same participants put forward with each other and other parties, and in reflection of their actions for the planning of community experiences that strengthened the work unit and the encounter between the community and school area for the construction of learning.

## Work Unit

The learning community participating in the research process or work unit was composed of 29 learners, six apprentice teachers, one research professor, 51 families from the community, and six external actors for a total of 195 participants.

## Methods

The research process carried out used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) method based on two cycles: problematization, and communitization. Both cycles considered the self-reflective spiral proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2013). This cycle referred to planning, action, observation, and reflection, as shown in Figure 1.

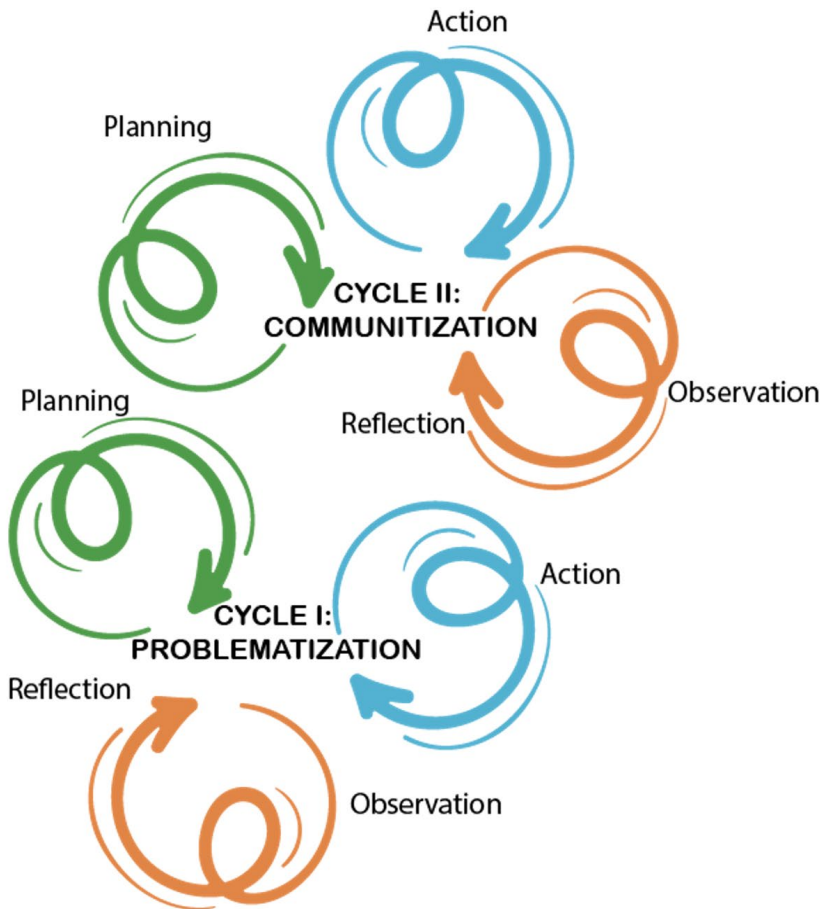


Figure 1. Cycles and Steps of Critical Participatory Action Research.

## **Cycle I: Problematization**

The CPAR enables the improvement of the participants' daily reality through their own reflections and their own actions as a community as one of the research goals, which is that participants identify their own problems. At planning, a socio-demographic survey was conducted to characterize the community. A proposal was also planned for initial focal groups with students, parents and mothers, the community, and teachers to problematize from their interests and reality. The preparation of semi-structured interviews to external community-linked actors was conducted, and the implementation of the problem tree and objectives. Then, in the action stage, the techniques were applied. The observation and reflection and data were systematized.

## **Cycle II: Communitization**

The rural territory of La Eureka is a particular community-oriented context. Novoa and Camacho (2017) state they are relating to each other, the community, and other parties. Thus, participants promote the changing action of their community.

The learning experiences were generated as a process of building learning based on the encounters and unity among the community members. They give value to itself and link school knowledge with the popular knowledge of peasant people in the community. From group and community events to democratic, participatory processes, everyone learns and teaches at the same time.

There were three learning experiences: *Eureka baila y canta*, *Los sabores de mi tierra* and *Los frutos de mi región*. A meeting of those with school knowledge was promoted, and a specialized classroom was created for the collection of the results of the learning experiences.

The cycle started with the planning time and the community learning experiences of the community leaders. They planned each experience considering stages and guiding questions, a timetable, and the celebration of the day of learning in the community. At the time of the event, the lead group socialized and validated the plans cooperatively to implement learning experiences. The

observation was conducted in parallel; this made visualizing the development of each of the experiences possible. Observation sheets were fulfilled by the researcher. The observation by the participants through reflective meetings was essential to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and to rearrange actions into a new cycle in further research if it was of interest to the participants.

The analysis of the information was conducted through elementary qualitative analysis with SPSS, the community characterization by Atlas Ti software, version 9, and the use of Glasser and Strauss' constant comparative method (1967). The theory was constructed empirically and inductively from the participants' reality through open, axial, and selective classification.

## Results

### Participant Characterization

The field work began with the sociodemographic survey of each of the 51 families of the community to cover 195 people and create a characterization of same. Through the meetings held in each of the households and the interaction with participants, the physical scenarios of the territory context, their lives, and the social realities of their culture, traditions, and customs are recognized.

Most of families had four members and very few just one. There were 57.4 men. The average age of females was 31.06 (SD=18.18%) and 26.87 for males. The ages ranged between 1 and 77 years.

The largest number of family members were in early adulthood (36.9 percent), and the fewest were in childhood and early childhood (4.1 percent). Education level was classified into groups of no degree (41.5); up to the fifth grade (14.4); and less in transition and technical level, each with one of the cases. The highest percentage (54.4) of family members are between preschool and eleventh grades.

The economic activities mainly involve coffee and other crops such as banana, *yuca*, vegetables and fruits. 19.5 do other activities.

Some people in the community have specific talents and feel qualified enough to teach others. One of the most important topics is agriculture (23.52%). Decoration, building, sewing, practicing sports, using technological tools, and environmental protection were the activities with the least participation (1% for each one).



Twelve people expressed their desire to learn how to cook. The responsibilities schoolchildren have in their families is mainly to study and do household chores (25 participants), five participants study and do farm work, and only 19 study exclusively.

### **Participatory Problematization with the Involved Learners**

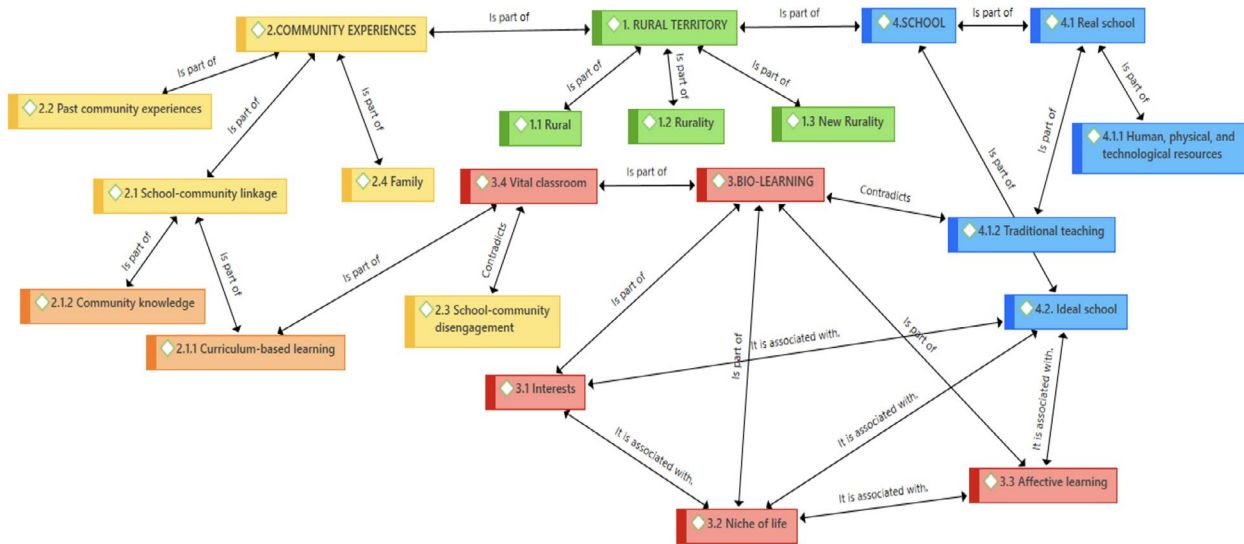
The research initially emerged from the interests of the researcher with categories from her perspectives. In this manner, the state of the art expanded the theoretical framework and community contributions. The categories of research are defined according to the needs.

However, in Cycle I, "Problematization," three focal groups with students, teachers, parents, mothers, and people from the community were planned through the lead group. Six semi-structured individual interviews were also conducted with external actors of the community who are only sometimes involved in community activities. In this main, the main needs of the community were recognized, and the research objectives were established.

Through inductive analysis, the constant comparative method, and the realities and expressions of the participants, 46 codes were found in open coding. Rural territory, rurality, new rurality, rural school, country, region, mountains, territories, places, animals, creeks, environment, coffee, bio-learning, traditional learning, school learning, students, play, likes, life, share, reality, time, space, community experiences, activities, unity, work, collaborate, connections, home, past experiences, current experiences, situations, resources, materials, actors, parents, people, teachers, grandparents, students, mother, children, family, and children were the most remarkable issues (see Figure 2).



The natural semantic network was created with the axial code:



**Figure 3.** *Semantic Network of Problematization.*

Rural territory, as a comprehensive category, covers rural, rurality, and new rural areas. The rural territory is the scenario in which the research is conducted and, at the same time, is linked to other scenarios of the same importance as community experiences, bio-learning, and school. It is seen as the space that impacts and not just one category of analysis.

A school is observed and understood in its reality with many traditionalist elements and whatever lack of resources, but, at the same time, as an ideal school for the participants. They would like to learn through their affection, the context of their daily and real-life experiences, and through their preferences. This makes bringing school knowledge closer to the knowledge of the people in the community possible.

The development of community experiences is encouraged by the implementation of learning experiences which are proposed and developed by the same actors who conduct the research, as they are the ones who really know their reality. This allows the construction of bio-learning. Therefore, reflecting on past experiences and, at the same time, improving on what has failed it is essential to.

Data gathered through the development of learning experiences is presented in the classroom, which is not just a four-walled space for children to learn. On the

contrary, it is a classroom that extends to the lively scenes of the community of La Eureka, and to its rural territory. All conceptions of classroom were created to improve the affected connection between the school and the community.

The main problem found by community participants is the disconnection between school and community. The lack of relationship between school knowledge and community knowledge is important because there is a need for the recognition of everyday practices from culture and customs as part of learning. For this reason, everyday practices in the life niche are not considered a form of learning or teaching school skills since they are perceived as separate actions from the school, as the student state:

I was respirating a little chick and it died faster, we had to bury it, I was sad for helping it die faster. We did not like that it happened because we love animals very much. (Focal group No. 2, students, personal communication, 2022, own translation).

This experience is meaningful for the student since it represents the death of an important being to him. However, this experience has not been linked to community or school knowledge. For example, emotional management could be learned. As well as the community knowledge of animal care or customs related to death taking into account school content that can be linked such as the biological functioning of animals. However, this experience has not been linked to community or school knowledge.

Practices are understood as coming from the vital niche, the context in which they live, but they are not considered for building learning as part of school knowledge. One is thought to learn only in school and what is learned in everyday life is not considered valuable. Assmann (2002), from a cognitive ecology perspective, states that the construction of learning starts from vital niches, from community experiences.

The gap between ideas, beliefs, and customs between adults and children is also a problem. There is a total disconnect between children's beliefs and the realities they live with their families in their homes, when there is not adequate articulation as to what is taught and learned in school. In this regard, Woods (1997) deals with critical community experiences articulating educational activities with events in everyday life.

Another problem concerns lost intergenerational practices that separate the school from the community. Parents' caring practices today have changed considerably compared to the past expressing that the previous ones were better as they were founded on union, collaboration, and on the common welfare. The learner teacher expressed:

The parents are very young, they think only of work, sometimes they call me to tell the children that they are waiting for them somewhere because they are not at home, they are doing some kind of work; they do not realize what children do in school, nor do they check their tasks; we could say that they don't know about the activities their children perform, I see that children are very alone, that there is no support from the parents because they have dedicated themselves to work. (Focal group No. 1, learner teacher, personal communication, own translation).

Parents in early adulthood are more devoted to economic matters than to building a heritage. They leave aside the training and their intervention in the learning processes of the learners. Customs have not been passed from generation to generation, and parents are not taking advantage of everyday activities. According to Woods (1998), that activities should not be planned and that critical experiences are not always structured must be understood. Activities can be provided at unexpected times in different scenarios. Learning experiences will be the input in which people can identify that learning arises naturally from daily activities and can be articulated in school.

The last problem is the lack of human, educational, technological, and facility resources. For this reason, valuing the territory as a source of resources and natural scenarios to be used in the development of several learning experiences is essential. For Lozano (2019), rural inhabitants must connect their daily lives, the practices of the countryside, and the elements and products of the territory, so as not to replace them with others from the so-called world of development.

In this way there is clarity regarding the issues in La Eureka that allows following up with "Communitization in Cycle II" with community experiences as an axis.

## **Bio-learning from Community Experiences**

The development of community experiences is based on three learning experiences: «*Eureka canta y baila*», «*Sabores de mi tierra*» and «*Frutos de mi región*», based on the process of production, harvesting, and marketing of coffee as the main economic product in this rural territory. The development of these experiences allowed articulating the school knowledge and the knowledge owned by the people of the community (Salcedo, 2021). All actions agreed and community-validated by the participants.

Based on data analysis, different categories and sub-categories are identified, and communitization becomes a critical element. The relationship between bio-community learning experiences, meetings from the main product of the

region, and coffee allowed linking school knowledge with the learner's peasant life (Romero, 2012; Gómez, 2015; Llambi & Pérez, 2007).

From an inductive approach, and from the open codification, 30 codes refer to: experience, *aprendiencia* (learning), community, learn, coffee, develop, communal, student, activity, eat, product, person, family, learner, meeting, work, process, know, child, leader, corn, school, participant, group, father, encounter, meet, get to know, home, region and action. As shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Communitization Open Code

From this open codification a natural semantic network of communitization is generated. It establishes relationships, identity conjunction or axial codification between the "Bio-learning Community" macro category and the "Bio-learning Community Training", "Bio-community Learners", "Needs of Collaborative Bio-learners", and "Projection of Bio-learning Learning" categories. From those there is a triangulation and theoretical adjustment based on the researcher viewpoint.

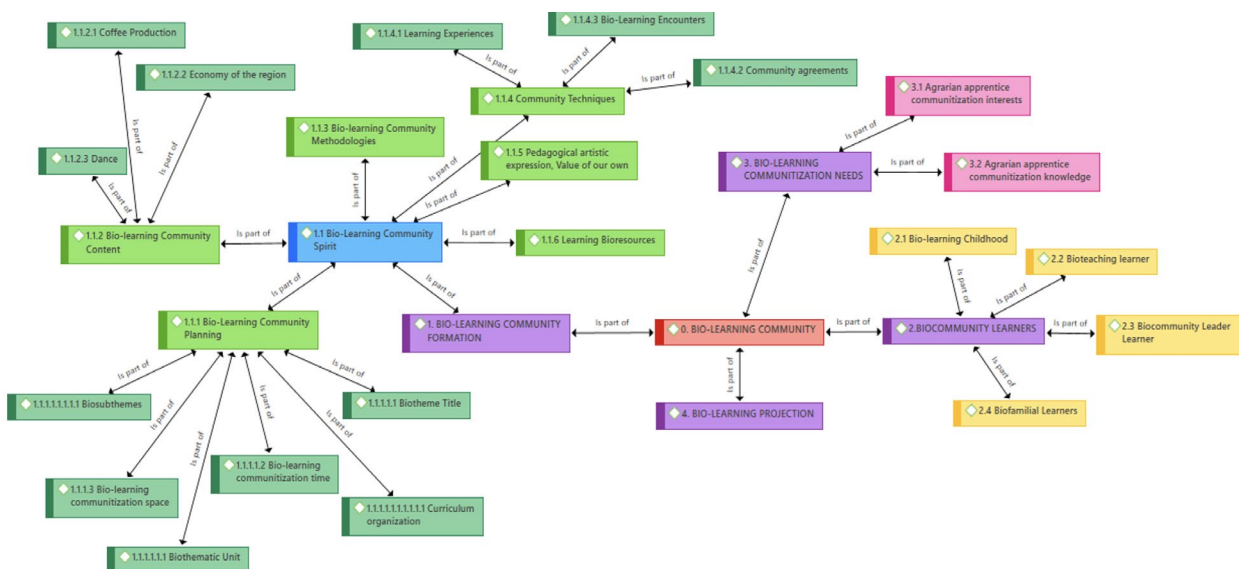


Figure 5. Communitization Semantic Network.

As a first finding, the natural semantic network of communitization from axial codification allows identifying that the community processes related to the construction of rural knowledge, connected to school knowledge, are distinguished by a type of community called “bio-learning”. That school and community are articulated through community meeting can be inferred. The community is formed by processes of community bio-learning training, a vital training in, from, and for life.

This kind of training focused on the indigenous in the culture is based on participatory intelligence and shared from the territory. It is filled with community knowledge based on agriculture where there is constant learning and farmers can teach. In other words, the individuals are the basis of unity between community and community spirit in bio-learning.

All of this relates to traditions from generation to generation and are applicable through community learning experiences.

One way to put into practice what has been learned would be to enable learners to improve the production techniques of coffee, among peers and to improve product quality, sharing knowledge through life experience. (Observation No. 2. *Frutos de mi Región*, 2022, own translation).

The community spirit of bio-learning in this research presents a structural organization similar to the school curriculum by the active participation of the researcher, and at the same time, the teacher. In order to make the community bio-learning training feasible, a community plan is created organized as follows: title of the biotopics, biotopic unit, biosubtopics and curriculum organization of biotopics, i.e. a community-accepted and participative accepted bio-curricular structure. They develop in a time and space of bio-learning communitization vital to the plan. As this passage states:

The action group considered a structure based on questions that would allow them to reflect on the problem, and at the same time, develop a coherent and organized process, followed by the plan for the first event by the action group and approval for implementation by the participating learning community. (Observation No. 2. *Frutos de mi Región*, 2022, own translation).

Another category of the spirit of the bio-learning community is the content of bio-learning or vital community knowledge, such as coffee production, the economy of the region, and dance. Equally important is the category of bio-learning community methodologies, as ways to share learning based on



learning experiences (Assmann, 2002). Each of these experiences has its own planning for building learning.

These learning experiences, as community learning techniques, emerged from community agreements and shared ideas to address the needs of bio-learning communitization. They also provide importance to artistic expression, pedagogical, and the value of learning from the territory, everyday life and the reality of life. Finally, with regard to the spirit of bio-learning community, the category of bio-resources emerges regarding human, physical, technological and didactic resources.

The bio-learning community comprised of “bio-learned children”, “bio-teaching learners”, “leading bio-community learners” and “bio-families” generates a community fabric between peasant knowledge and schoolchildren, as well as lifelong learning processes, because life learns and teaches (Salcedo, 2021).

An example of participation of various stakeholders involved in the community processes is shown in the following paragraph:

The achievement of the costumes and the stage elements was a community project, by acquiring the resources through activities managed by them. For this, all contributed with their artistic skills: the fashionist who made the costumes; the parents who collaborated with the achievement or doing other elements such as baskets, small bullets, among others. (Observation No. 1. «*Eureka Canta y Baila, 2022*», own translation).

This is intended to contribute to the territory by addressing the needs of bio-learning community, to consider the interests of an agricultural learning community and knowledge of an agribusiness community. So, the pedagogical requirement for the school is based on community dialogue, a dialogue that does not exclude the knowledge of people of the region. Lastly, the category “projection of the apprentice bio-learner” refers to what inspires the community on the community training that is intended to be maintained over time.

## Discussion

Based on the findings, in Cycle I, “Problematization”, the category of rural territory was established. It contains rural, rurality, and new rural areas, and is associated with the categories of study: community experiences, bio-learning

and school. The latter is understood as the scenario impacted by the other categories.

A school was observed, understood from reality, with still many traditionalist elements and scarce resources, but, at the same time, for participants as a dream school, in which they would like to learn through affection, the context, their realities and daily experiences, through their tastes that enable bringing together school and community knowledge. To achieve this goal, learning experiences linked community participants.

The main problem discovered by community participants is the disconnect between school and community, and the lack of relationship between school knowledge and community knowledge. It is generated by the rupture among ideas, beliefs, and customs between adults and children. There is a total disconnect between children's beliefs and the realities they live with their families in their homes. There is no connection with what is taught and learned in school. Intergenerational practices have been lost and there have been problems with human, educational, technological, and infrastructure resources.

Then, in Cycle II, "Communitization", community experiences are developed, based on learning experiences regarding the processes of coffee production, harvesting and marketing. From open coding, a natural semantic network of communitization is generated by establishing relationships, identity conjunction or central coding to a macro-category (bio-learning community). The emerging network of communitization allows identifying that the community processes related to the construction of peasant knowledge and the school knowledge are distinguished by a type of community called bio-learner from the same bio-learning, or learning in, from, and for life.

The contribution of community members to the context is significant, as it mobilized different actors to turn to the school, rethink, and commit themselves to building it together as co-builders of other learnings. That is, contrary to the simplistic equation in crisis when Assmann (2022) explains that knowledge arises through learning. And how does learning arise? Through teaching. From this approach, a good learning would be the normal result of good teaching and disciplined study. From a different perspective, school keeps the imagination alive, recreates the social structure and produces the way man thinks and acts, or reproduces inspiration. In contrast, school fosters innovation and the mobilization of old structures for transformation.

Community experiences approach rural knowledge through the school, its dynamics, its everyday life, through the analysis and reflections in relation to the communitization of school practices and knowledge, bio-learning and the rural territory that emerges in the relationship between school and community. According to Torres (2013), a community is made up of social forms that share

values, interests, and goals. Generally, this is associated with a small area or small population, often poor or marginalized that shares a type of property (ideals, needs, goals). This is a unified and important image of society that makes it impossible to see the differences, the conflicts of any organization. From the concept of rural school as a place based on the social co-construction of knowledge, it starts by observing some activities of the rural population that can be within a good educational and cultural environment as a response or resistance to levels of current political and social inequality.

Providing information on rural education is also important. Thinking about rural education and its important role in the educational system itself seems appropriate, to understand it openly according to its approval modified by real life events of the community. Rural education responds to the damage from the health level in terms of its decontextualization and the significant disengagement of the urgent needs. Contreras and Pérez (2010) argue that learning about the experience and its ambiguity provides the opportunity to break with educational and social dichotomy to go beyond the concept of knowing and research. The study of the experience has the concepts of “meaning” and “knowing,” as support and research findings, guardians of the relations of ideas and experiences to show the complexity of each situation. Different views of rural education and its structure must be considered to create knowledge based on the way in which community relations are taught and defined in these rural areas.

Likewise, rural education uses social knowledge, from school practices, as a process of continuous learning, and introduces two new ideas in the proposal: bio-learning and the communitization of school methods and knowledge. This perspective allows for considering possible paths of other rural organizations that includes new knowledge. Knowledge of the situation, built by the real community and the school, can be a catalyst for change in certain rural educational environments. Parra et al. (2019), states that bio-learning implies the ability to think and agree from mutual respect, the approach others through their family and social contexts. This new way of looking at learning makes human deployment possible. Then, the creation of bio-learning communities aimed at bringing together groups and leaders in processes of organization and

co-building is proposed. It contributes to the transformation, democracy, and the development of the educational problem from the institutional integration, managed as systems of life to overcome the current dominant traditional models.

## Conclusions

The CPAR method is the base from which to demonstrate that the learning community is part of the research and the products of the present study. The method allowed identifying the main problem as the gap between the school and the rural community, a central axis for the approach of different cycles that generates learning experiences. Therefore, the research elements are not only in the spiral, but in the product of interaction, of the active community participation of all learners to reduce the distances between community members. This makes sense to these learning experiences as facilitators of bio-learning, bio-communitarianism, and bio-learner. They emerge from the activities of the countryside between rural children and families, and their relationships. Thus, it may be said that to enable bio-pedagogy, the community demands that the school be community-built, change its curricular, school, and disciplinary learnings.

In this process, the subject being trained to comprehend that every bio-learning action is biological and self-creative is crucial. This means that there is a metamorphosis of learning through bio-learning, from student to biological learner and family collaboration in their children's schoolwork, to be called a learning bio-community. That is to say, the subject continuously learns from what people do in the territory and the ability to be involved, bio-teaches with the rural teacher.

In short, the creation of learning experiences that enable bio-learning in students in La Eureka at Tarqui-Huila results in a direct challenge to teaching or an advocacy for constructivism, as well as fosters a community-based critical experience environment that facilitates the development of real-world sensibilities and acts as a catalyst for both curriculum-based and rural learning experiences.

This means applying practices to the educational setting and also planning strategies or experiences related to rural life. It also implies living the rural reality with the same students who have educated their sons and daughters under the same knowledge, maybe far from school; and also a rural school that has trained from the essential areas of established knowledge, forgetting their context and reality.

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# ***Fables of Memory: Reconstruction of Collective Memory through Literary Creation\****

*[English Version]*

Fábulas de la memoria: reconstrucción de la memoria colectiva a través de la creación literaria

Fábulas da memória: reconstrução da memória coletiva através da criação literária

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**Colombia**

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The main objective of this research is to reconstruct the collective memory through literary creation, involving students who are victims of displacement and the Colombian armed conflict within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Literature and the Spanish Language of the Universidad Popular del Cesar. **Methodology:** The methodology employed was action-participation research, utilizing the creative writing workshop as a tool and space for the production of fictional texts aimed at reconstructing the collective memory of the participants. **Results:** The outcome comprised a set of methodologies and tools to be utilized in creative workshops, targeting vulnerable populations within the context of the Colombian armed conflict. Identified gaps and voids in the official history of the armed conflict are an opportunity for rewriting a version through fiction and literary creation that vindicates the experiences of all affected individuals, thus reconstructing the collective memory of the country. **Conclusions:** Spaces for reading, dialogue, writing, and creation, such as the creative writing workshop, are indispensable for the reconstruction of a collective memory that promotes the search for truth, forgiveness, and peace.

**Key words:** armed conflict; collective memory; literature; creative writing; fiction (obtained from the UNESCO thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** el objetivo principal de esta investigación es reconstruir la memoria colectiva a través de la creación literaria, con los estudiantes víctimas del desplazamiento y el conflicto armado del programa de Licenciatura en Literatura y Lengua Castellana de la Universidad Popular del Cesar. **Metodología:** como metodología se ocupó la investigación acción-participación, utilizando el taller de escritura creativa como herramienta y espacio para la producción de textos ficcionales que reconstruyeran la memoria colectiva de los participantes. **Resultados:** se obtuvo como resultado un grupo de metodologías y herramientas para utilizar en talleres creativos, que están dirigidos a poblaciones vulnerables en el marco del conflicto armado. Se identificó que las grietas y vacíos de la historia oficial sobre el conflicto armado son una posibilidad para que, desde la ficción y la creación literaria, se reescriba una versión que reivindique las experiencias reales de todos los sujetos afectados y así, reconstruir la memoria colectiva del país. **Conclusiones:** se concluyó que los espacios de lectura, diálogo, escritura y creación, como el taller de escritura creativa, son indispensables para la reconstrucción de una memoria colectiva que propenda la búsqueda de la verdad, el perdón y la paz.

**Palabras clave:** conflicto armado; memoria colectiva; literatura; escritura creativa; ficción (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o principal objetivo desta pesquisa é reconstruir a memória coletiva por meio da criação literária, com alunos vítimas do deslocamento e do conflito armado, no âmbito do programa de bacharelado em Literatura e Língua Espanhola da Universidad Popular del Cesar. **Metodologia:** a metodologia empregada foi a pesquisa participativa, utilizando a oficina de escrita criativa como ferramenta e espaço para a produção de textos ficcionais, os quais reconstruíram a memória coletiva dos participantes.

**Resultados:** o resultado consistiu em um conjunto de metodologias e ferramentas destinadas a serem utilizadas em oficinas criativas voltadas para populações vulneráveis no contexto do conflito armado. Identificou-se que as lacunas e brechas na história oficial do conflito armado representam uma oportunidade para, por meio da ficção e da criação literária, reescrever uma narrativa que dê voz às experiências reais de todos os afetados, contribuindo assim para a reconstrução da memória coletiva do país. **Conclusões:** concluiu-se que os espaços de leitura, diálogo, escrita e criação, como a oficina de escrita criativa, são indispensáveis para a reconstrução de uma memória coletiva que promova a busca pela verdade, pelo perdão e pela paz.

**Palavras chaves:** conflito armado; memória coletiva; literatura; escrita criativa; ficção (extraído do dicionário de sinônimos da UNESCO).

## Introduction

For many years, Latin America has been the scene of multiple representations of political, social, and symbolic violence. The various countries that comprise it, and their populations, have experienced the consequences of corrupt and oppressive states. Each country on the continent has its own extensive history of dictatorships, finger-pointing, disappearances, kidnappings, famines, and deaths, but none quite like Colombia. In this regard, Chevalier (2022) states:

In the final report on the armed conflict, the Colombia Truth Commission documents, between 1985 and 2018, at least 450,664 homicides resulting from the internal armed conflict, as well as approximately 121,768 missing persons, and 55,770 kidnapped individuals, not including the 7.7 million victims of forced displacement (para. 2).

Within the context of the national conflict, the department of Cesar stands out as a territory commonly affected by violence perpetrated by various illegal national groups. Trejos (2020) comments that "According to the United Nations Development Program and the National Center of Historical Memory, Cesar is the Colombian department that evidenced the third most kidnappings between 1970 and 2010 with a total of 2,618 cases." The recent demobilization of illegal organizations, such as the Northern Block of the AUC and various self-defense groups, has given rise to the emergence of criminal organizations associated with drug trafficking and, with them, a series of violent events such as systematized extortion. In addition, of the six actions committed by the National Liberation Army (ELN) during its armed strike in the Caribbean region (February 10-13, 2018), five have been held in municipalities in southern Cesar.

Regardless of the legitimacy of these figures, even today, many Colombians believe that these data do not represent the truth about the victims of the war. Additionally, the imagery that points to the armed conflict in Colombia as a lesser evil that has only affected a few prevails. This phenomenon downplaying the number of victims and the real and holistic consequences of the war comes from the teaching and repetition of an official history that has been publicized and viralized through the country's ruling classes and the perpetrators of violence through the media. This with the objective of perpetuating this incomplete truth that benefits certain social groups in the country through the profits that systematic violence brings them. Considering this, university and research centers in the country have joined efforts to address the emerging need for research on historical studies of the armed conflict, as well as on perspectives aimed at

repairing and rebuilding by and for the victims regarding their civil and human condition.

From this perspective, studies on memory emerge, more precisely on collective memory; defined as that “which magically recomposes the past, and whose memories refer to the experience that a community or a group can pass on to an individual or groups of individuals” (Betancourt, 2004, p. 126). In this way, the facts of a nation's past, related to a specific phenomenon (such as war, conflict, violence, or displacement), can be reconstructed from the collective experience of a community when they gather, dialogue, and work with those memories. This, with the objective of creating a new past that considers the different perspectives of each participant, that complements the official history and its gaps, and that becomes an object of legacy for other groups or communities.

Thus, the determination to propose fiction and literary creation as new ways to address the gaps in official history germinates within the context of memory where employing the creative writing workshop is the ideal setting in which victims of the armed conflict in Colombia can dialogue, recreate, and reconstruct a collective memory of past events. Therefore, the objective of the present research is to reconstruct collective memory through literary creation with students who are victims of displacement and the armed conflict within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Literature and the Spanish Language at the Universidad Popular del Cesar.

For the present research, making a thorough review of selected research works that employ literary creation and creative writing was important as a means for the construction and reconstruction of the memory of the armed conflict in Colombia, especially in educational contexts such as the classrooms of schools, and universities.

Botero and Prieto (2016) created a didactic route that allowed spaces and processes for the reconstruction of collective memory in schools through the analysis of three selected works of Colombian literature, reflecting three historical moments of violence in Colombia and fostering processes for students to create their own vision of the conflict through literary analysis. Similarly, Bustamante (2017) proposed a project to understand the effects of writing exercises on individuals who are victims of the armed conflict and have participated in processes of writing emotions and memories in the city of Medellín. The goal is to analyze some of the experiences related to the writing process at both individual and group levels among the study participants, and to identify the effects of the writing processes on them.

For his part, Estrada (2017) sought to identify an appropriate narrative strategy for the reconstruction of historical memory in children who complete the primary education cycle, conducting workshops in educational institutions

in Bello, Antioquia. This demonstrated that fables work as a narrative strategy for the reconstruction of historical memory, offering the opportunity to foster lasting learning through their morals, and guiding the reader in reflections toward reconciliation and peaceful conflict resolution. From another perspective, Palacios (2018) outlined a project that focused on reconstructing a historical memory that would allow for the strengthening of writing practices in rural areas, based on autobiographical accounts and chronicles about the armed conflict in the Nueva Granada Educational Institution; thus, contemplating the school as a scenario for peacebuilding in times of post-conflict in rural areas.

The "*Formadores d-mentes*" educational group (2018) formulated a project involving students from the Bachelor's Program in Spanish Language and Literature at the Technological University of Antioquia, as well as protagonists of the armed conflict in Colombia (victims and reintegrated individuals), in spaces of interaction and literary creation. The aim is to foster reconciliation and reconstruction of social fabric from academia. Finally, Rebellón (2018) proposed an idea demonstrating how stories of the armed conflict from the school can be transformed into tales. Meanwhile, Patiño (2020) developed a writing methodology regarding the possibility and necessity of writing about the Colombian conflict through new and different aesthetics and narratives that envision a particular aspect of the conflict. They explore microfiction as a device that opens the possibility of once again discussing what happened.

Within the framework of violence in the department of Cesar, the Universidad Popular del Cesar emerges as a prominent space. It has not only been home to thousands of students who are direct victims of the armed conflict and displacement (both from the city of Valledupar and students from various municipalities of the department), but the university itself has been recognized as a subject of rights due to the multiple attacks its community suffered between 1987 and 2006. Regarding this, Rodríguez (2018) comments that:

[...] the Universidad Popular del Cesar endured a scheme resembling an assault and paramilitary infiltration, resulting in the eradication of critical thinking and the imposition of a single ideology. This led to the dismantling of alternative and oppositional organizational expressions within the university community, the establishment of a university catering to the interests of education merchants, and the diversion of a significant portion of its budget toward specific clients and corrupt networks" (p. 9, own translation).

For these reasons, implementing investigative projects at the Universidad Popular del Cesar has been necessary — considering the university's nature as a subject of reparation and as a place where hundreds of people who have suffered the horrors of violence coexist — to delve into the past events of the conflict for the creation of a collective memory that dignifies the victims and seeks truth, forgiveness, and peace. In this context, the present research project emerged. For its development, establishing reading and film clubs where students could, through fiction, study the reconstruction of collective memory regarding displacement and the armed conflict was first necessary. Subsequently, creative writing workshops were implemented with the students to reconstruct the collective memory of displacement and the armed conflict through their own perspective. The final step was publishing a digital magazine featuring the literary product that emerged from the creative writing workshops regarding the reconstruction of collective memory regarding displacement and the armed conflict in Colombia.

## **Memory: Notions and Approximations**

Currently, there are many authors who have dedicated intellectual and creative efforts to memory studies, making valuable contributions that highlight the importance of understanding memory as an element for sociocultural studies in the present democratic era. For example, for Sarlo (2012), understanding memory as a means of comprehending a national past and building a present is only possible by observing the object of study (the events) through a subjective lens. In the author's own words:

[...] A storyline for the market is no longer limited only to the narration of an event that historians would have hidden or overlooked, but also adopts a focus close to the actors and seeks to discover a truth in the reconstruction of their lives (p. 12, own translation).

Thus, Sarlo conceives that changing the perspective with which the facts of the past were analyzed and alleged works on memory were built is necessary. This due to the historical discipline that gave relevance to the general facts of the past fractures the possibility of conceiving it from the most intimate and real perspective: that of the victims.

In the same way, Sarlo proposes this subjective turn, since research trends point to the fact that historical science — possibly, and from a contemporary perspective — has defects that have been perceived by scholars and intellectuals, as

well as by the masses. With the pervasive use of the internet and the continuous flow of news, certain ruptures become more noticeable when relating the past and the present. Within those teleological gaps of the historical discipline, people begin to distrust history as a social institution and feel the need to make a turn toward the subjectivity of the testimony, the story, and its properties. In this regard, Sarlo (2012) asserts that "academic history loses due to methodological reasons, but also due to its own formal and institutional restrictions, which make it more concerned with internal rules than with the search for external legitimizations" (p. 17).

Currently, Klein (2007) studies a fundamental relationship for achieving the objective of this research, which involves bringing fiction closer to memory and fictionalizing the past (or some fragments of it), with the ultimate goal of dignifying memory through the gifts of storytelling.

Through life narratives we gain access to a fascinating field of study, since, by staging the very process of narration, they allow us to approach not only the reflection about specific questions of the genre [...] but also general issues about what is worthy of narrating or what the process of fictionalization consists of (p. 16).

In this manner, analyzing how the act of narrating what happened becomes an exercise in recreating memory is crucial. To narrate, to recount the events of a past action — which for a long time was minimized to a memory — one by one and bring it into the present transformed into words, signifies dignifying it through fictionalization, and countering the statistics and history that nullify it. For Klein (2007), individual and collective memory only differ from each other through the subjects who construct them, but fortunately, they also share the same purpose. Regarding that, he states:

Memory is the mediating concept between lived time and narration [...] and if memory presupposes the conservation of practical experience, collective memory is nothing more than a set of stories produced by a non-individual subject that fulfills the same function as the individual subject, that is, that of inheriting and conserving experiences (Klein, 2007, p. 28).

The relevance of this contribution lies in the immediate nature of collective memory, as the exercise of recreating it requires the involvement of multiple actors. As an individual memory of the past is constructed within a group context, a collective memory is simultaneously reconstructed. It is immediately nourished when two individuals narrate their past, thus building a clearer notion



of mutual recollection. That is to say, multiple individuals reconstructing an individual memory within a group context ensure the automatic reconstruction of a collective memory. According to Richard (2010):

[...] art and literature know how to explore the gaps in meaning, the opacities of representation, that is, everything that official memory, institutional memory or mythical past tends to suppress from their monumental constructions so as not to spoil their illusions of control and dominance (p. 128).

For Richard, the role of art, of fiction, is to embrace the subjectivities of the narratives of the victims and dignify their fragile and recent enunciation. Since the memory being brought to the present is a recent event, it returns to the subject in a painful manner when recalled. If the past event were to return to the present in a harmless manner, then it would lose its presential attribute that contradicts the official discourse of institutional memory.

This is where fiction takes center stage in memory reconstruction processes, assuming the role as one of the few options that can contribute to the narrative of events. Not only does it present another version of the past, counteract the official version, or acknowledge the experiences of the victims, but it also helps construct a new present where the events of the past, presumably violent, are valued, with the premise of forgiveness and peace. Without these last two elements, reconstruction would lose its ultimate purpose and would be reduced to being just a methodology for counting.

## Methodology

This research was conducted using the participatory action research method, as it is a broad family that includes different ways of conducting research for social change with the participation of people. However, to clarify which of its different lines of work is applicable to the present project, Selener's (1997) definition will be used, which states that participatory action research (PAR) has been conceptualized as "[...] a process by which members of an oppressed group or community collect and analyze information, and act on their problems with the purpose of finding solutions and promoting political and social transformations" (p. 17).

Participatory action research is ideal for the implementation of this project because, as a method, it seeks to transform the realities of its participants through analysis, dialogue, debate, and reflection.

Among the procedures employed to carry out this research, the development of reading and film clubs was included, where participants had the opportunity to study how, through literature and audiovisual content, alternative discourses about violence in the Colombian territory are constructed. Similarly, creative writing workshops were implemented with the aim of allowing students to enhance their skills in narrating their experiences through texts. This was done with the intention of recounting, through fiction, the memory of personal experiences regarding the conflict and displacement, thereby contributing to the reconstruction of a collective memory.

The creative writing workshop "Horrible Night" (also the title of the digital magazine that features the product of the workshop) was developed throughout the 2022 semesters, during 16 meetings (eight meetings per semester) at the Sabana branch of the Universidad Popular del Cesar, every Friday from 10 a. m. to noon. Biographical, bibliographical, and audiovisual material from the Consuelo Araujo Noguera Cultural Center (pertaining to the network of public libraries of the Banco de la República) was used as tools for the development of many of the sessions. The J14 and 69 traveling suitcases, the RELATA traveling suitcases, the collection of games, «*La paz se toma la palabra*» [Peace takes the floor] and the tool "A Kit Against Forgetfulness/A Kit to Heal the Soul" by the Truth Commission, and the audiovisual contents of the *cinescuola.org* portal of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia were employed.

At the beginning of this research proposal, the workshop was conceived as a meeting place where participants could learn to write and put their personal and family stories regarding the conflict into words, as well as a place where students of the Literature and Spanish Language program of the Universidad Popular del Cesar could dialogue and share personal perspectives on the official history of violence in Colombia, the violent events that still plague the Department of Cesar, and their views and opinions on the reading of a literature of violence.

Likewise, noting that in this project the processes of reading, dialogue, writing, and the creative writing workshop constitute a methodological approach was necessary. Additionally, explaining how those elements function as a methodology was crucial. In this order of ideas, thinking of the processes of reading, dialogue, and writing not as cognitive procedures, but as social practices was essential. What many authors have called "literacy," which is nothing more than:

The process [which] always involves a way of using reading and writing within the framework of a specific social purpose. If we examine the uses of reading and writing, beyond the school context, we can understand that reading and writing are not ends in themselves: one does not read or write simply for the sake

of reading and writing. On the contrary, they are ways to achieve broader social objectives and cultural practices. (Zavala, 2008, pp. 23-24, own translation).

In this specific context, the reading and writing practices that take place in the framework of the creative writing workshop "Horrible Night" confer to that space the suitability to learn to read and write in a literary key, and the capacity to be a place of specific social practices. In a particular sense, it represents an opportunity to build and reconstruct the memory of the armed conflict through creative processes.

The creative writing workshop also functions as a work methodology, considering the premise that its main objectives are related to language in its broadest meaning.

The literary creation workshop is of a general nature, it admits all types of apprentices and its object of study is verbal expression from all points of views, both the creation itself and the reception of the texts. (Klein, 2015, p. 20, own translation).

Thus, the creative writing workshop can become a specific place for a certain type and number of people to get together to write and can also revolve around specific themes and have multiple purposes. In view of this, it is important to state that:

The reading workshop, which is the least pretentious in appearance, can become a real factor of cultural growth for the community [...] The only goal pursued is the pleasure of reading and sharing the conversation about what has been read. (Macías, 2015, p. 22, own translation).

Therefore, asking how the reading and writing workshop — which in principle is a time to learn to read and write — can become an ideal place to create memory based on historical and specific moments of an affected community is valid. For this reason, understanding the workshop as an artisanal method, a place for learning by doing, by working is necessary. Characteristics shared with memory construction which, in the words of Gallardo and Salazar (2012) — referring to the postulates of Elizabeth Jelin's *Los Trabajos de la Memoria* (The Work of Memory) — assert that:

The author resorts to the concept of work to address the concept of memory, as she understands its exercise as a distinctive trait of the human condition that places the individual and society in an active and productive position. One is an

agent of transformation, and in the process transforms oneself and the world (p. 146).

In this way, the creative writing workshop can be the ideal place to narrate the facts about the armed conflict, and to fictionalize them to recreate them in the imaginative field and find the truth there. Thus, this space transforms the personal experience of the student attending the creative writing workshop —through the encounter with their own recreated memory— as well as that of all other attendees through the recreation of their own and collective memories.

The work done in "Horrible Night" was very diverse and was tailored to the planned objective for each session. In some sessions, reading select stories or tales narrating horror stories in the context of the armed conflict was decided unanimously, followed by discussions on how the authors work, narrate, and create based on the theme. Examples of these texts were *Sofoco* by Laura Ortiz Gómez, *Mambrú perdió la guerra* by Irene Vasco, and *Delirio* de Laura Restrepo. In other sessions, using the tools provided by the Consuelo Araujo Noguera Cultural Center, the participants told the group how they and their families had been affected by the phenomenon of violence and displacement. In most of the sessions, writing exercises were developed to nurture the final stories that would be anthologized and published in the digital magazine.

Again, instrumentalizing the pain of the workshop participants to turn their own experiences into fictional stories or chronicles of real memories was never among the purposes of the project or that of the researchers. On the contrary, the attendees themselves created, based on their experiences, fictional stories, mostly with imaginary characters and places, to narrate their discontent toward forgetting and the official history.

## Results

The results obtained from the development of the «*Fábulas de la memoria: reconstrucción de la memoria colectiva a través de la creación literaria*» project, with students who are victims of displacement and the armed conflict within the Bachelor's Degree Program in Literature and Spanish Language at the Universidad Popular del Cesar, are of different natures and serve different purposes. First, the reconstruction of collective memory regarding the armed

conflict in Colombia necessitates carrying out projects that promote the group, collective, and cooperative work of victims and perpetrators who wish to make a critical and analytical reading of official events and their own experiences. This was identified through the application of the workshop tools and methodologies. Likewise, the official history of the armed conflict in Colombia was determined to have gaps wherein rewriting the narrative to homogenize the experience of all the individuals involved was shown to be possible. And, finally, the workshops demonstrated that the use of artistic tools, in this case literary creation and creative writing, are vital to rewriting this official history through the possibility as an aesthetic device, but also as a means of memory and creation of memory that fiction offers.

As a direct result of the implementation and application of the project, a methodology and specific work tools were created for use in reading and creative writing workshops with vulnerable populations related to the armed conflict in Colombia. The creation of this methodology and tools were necessary to achieve the first two specific objectives of this project: developing reading and film clubs where students could, through fiction, study the reconstruction of collective memory of displacement and armed conflict in Colombia; and implementing creative writing workshops with students to reconstruct, through their own perspective, the collective memory of displacement and armed conflict in Colombia.

This result consists of a group of reports containing each of the activities conducted with the tools provided by the Consuelo Araujo Noguera Cultural Center. This includes the texts, short films, and bibliographic material used in each session, as well as brief pedagogical reflections that provided a guide for those who used these materials in the framework of the workshops. Likewise, a group of texts (short stories) produced by the workshop attendees was obtained as a result. These are located within the theme of the armed conflict in Colombia and could also be called literature of violence. These texts were gathered in the digital magazine "Horrible Night," which was presented to the academic community and the general public on November 25, 2022 as part of the VIII Literature Symposium, «*Memorias, Arte y Construcción de Paz 2022*», of the Universidad Popular del Cesar. The launching of the journal consisted of a meeting between the authors (workshop attendees, students of the Literature and Spanish Language program), professors, researchers, peers, and colleagues.

## Conclusions

Before initiating the development of the research project, several investigations were explored that had as a central axis the construction and reconstruction of collective memories regarding the armed conflict in Colombia, through processes of creation, reading, and writing. Very significant proposals were found, appropriate to the contexts in which they were developed; some of them were mentioned above. The exploration did not find any proposal that developed a work methodology based on the creative writing workshop as a tool for the reconstruction of collective memory with university students from the Department of Cesar who were victims of the armed conflict.

At the beginning of the process, a call was made for students belonging to the Bachelor's Degree Program in Literature and Spanish Language of the Universidad Popular del Cesar who were victims of the armed conflict or displaced by violence, to join the creative writing workshop "Horrible Night." Thus, the workshop began with the aim of bringing together these students at a specific time and place to carry out reading, dialogue, and writing activities framed within the theme of the armed conflict and violence in Colombia. From the beginning, the workshop was an enjoyable space where students could engage in extracurricular activities, but also turned it into a safe space for students to recount their anecdotes and family experiences regarding the horrors, murders, kidnappings, and disappearances.

In this order of ideas, indicating that collective memory is only reconstructed through the encounter of a group of individuals who are related by a social, political, or anecdotal facts is necessary to point out the main conclusion of this project. These facts are gathered to tell the different versions of the events, and thus read, analyze, and recount them from the different perspectives and life experiences of the affected subjects. In that encounter, a tool was needed to enable such readings and analysis, but also to function as a device for reconstruction, for the creation of proposals from a vision that considers victims, perpetrators, and their generational repercussions (in the case of the Colombian armed conflict).

Thus, in this project, literary creation, that is, the narratives constructed by the workshop participants, makes the reconstruction of collective memory possible since, first, the narratives provide the opportunity to tell the genuine truth of each of the experiences of the subjects involved, to discuss, analyze, and read it in a community. Second, literary creation allows working on this experience through writing, seeking to transform experience into memory by using the cracks in the official truth as niches for fiction to inhabit as a more real and meaningful version for victims and perpetrators alike. Finally, this story,

coming from real experiences, is reconstructed as a fictional story so that it can be read and listened to by other actors in the community and the country.

Therefore, the project affirms that reconstructing the collective memory through literary creation with victims of displacement and the armed conflict is possible. This fits within the general project objective of developing workshops and activities that feed a methodology of reading, dialogue, and writing that is aimed at the creation of new discourses that trend toward truth, forgiveness, and peace. Considering this, a memory was reconstructed regarding violent events of the armed conflict that occurred in the Department of Cesar, through multiple working methodologies that emphasize dialogical and creative processes as tools that contradict forgetfulness, as well as the official history that silences victims and the repetition of violent discourses and actions that prolong war and horror in Colombia.

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# Diversity in Adversity: Exploring the Differential Impact of Gender in the Contexts of Incarceration in Argentina\*

[English Version]

La diversidad en la adversidad: explorando el impacto diferencial de género en los contextos de encierro en Argentina

Diversidade na adversidade: explorando o impacto diferencial do gênero em contextos de confinamento na Argentina

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study seeks to explore, describe, and quantify the effects that the experiences of incarceration have on women in prison contexts in Argentina. **Methodology:** The results of an original database were analyzed. The database includes two surveys conducted by the Center for Latin American Studies on Insecurity and Violence (CELIV/UNTREF) in 2013 and 2019 in prisons of the Federal

\* Project associated with CELIV of UNTREF. Financing: There is no public funding. Declaration of interests: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest. Data availability: All relevant data can be found in the article. More information on the database used can be found at: <https://celiv.untref.edu.ar/>

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and Buenos Aires Penitentiary System. The sample consisted of 845 males and 188 females who participated in the survey in 2013, and 838 males and 200 females in 2019. **Results:** The results of this study indicate that there are gender differences in the effects of incarceration on the inside, which are mainly crystallized in the behavior of the nearby containment networks. For women, contact with their emotional environment is more limited than for men.

**Key words:** impact; gender perspective; prison; surveys; Argentina (obtained from SAIJ thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** en el presente estudio se busca explorar, describir y cuantificar los efectos que las experiencias del encierro manifiestan en las mujeres al interior de los contextos penitenciarios en Argentina. **Metodología:** para ello, se analizan los resultados de una base de datos original, que incluye dos encuestas realizadas por el Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos sobre Inseguridad y Violencia (CELIV/UNTREF) en el año 2013 y en 2019 en cárceles del Sistema Penitenciario Federal y Bonaerense. La muestra consistió en 845 varones y 188 mujeres que participaron de la encuesta en el 2013, y 838 varones y 200 mujeres en el año 2019. **Resultados:** los resultados de este estudio permiten indicar que existen diferencias de género en los efectos del encierro en el *adentro*, que se cristalizan principalmente en el comportamiento de las redes de contención cercanas. Para las mujeres, el contacto con su entorno afectivo se ve más limitado que para los varones.

**Palabras clave:** impacto; perspectiva de género; prisión; encuestas; Argentina (obtenidos del tesoro SAIJ).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** este estudo busca explorar, descrever e quantificar os efeitos que as experiências de encarceramento têm sobre as mulheres em contextos prisionais na Argentina. **Metodologia:** para isso, foram analisados os resultados de um banco de dados original, que inclui duas pesquisas realizadas pelo Centro de Estudos Latino-Americanos sobre Insegurança e Violência (CELIV/UNTREF) em 2013 e 2019 em prisões do Sistema Penitenciário Federal e de Buenos Aires. A amostra consistiu

em 845 homens e 188 mulheres que participaram da pesquisa em 2013, e 838 homens e 200 mulheres em 2019. **Resultados:** os resultados deste estudo indicam que existem diferenças de gênero nos efeitos do confinamento interno, que se manifestam principalmente no comportamento das redes de apoio próximas a eles. Para as mulheres, o contato com seu ambiente afetivo é mais limitado do que para os homens.

**Palavras chaves:** impacto; perspectiva de gênero; prisão; pesquisas; Argentina (obtidas do tesouro SAIJ).

## Introduction

The female incarceration rate has shown spikes in recent years, and many studies highlight that this rate is growing much faster than the female crime rate (Morris, 1987; Seear & Player, 1986; Davis, 1996; Gelsthorpe & Morris, 2002). Women are overrepresented in property, non-violent, and drug trafficking-related crimes. This "criminal paradox", as Gelsthorpe and Morris (2002) call it, reflects the need to force a radical change, and for this it becomes fundamental to rethink punitive policies (Almeda, 2017) and the implications that imprisonment assumes from a gender approach.

Different works (CELS et al., 2011; Monclus, 2017) reveal that female incarceration has a different impact on the *outside* than male incarceration, and this is especially linked to the gender roles socially assigned and played by one and the other. The imprisonment of women transcends their individuality and also affects their environment, especially the people who depend on their care. Considering the central role assumed by women in the daily care and economic support of their children and other dependents, imprisonment provokes a strong emotional void and impact on them, especially on their children, as the daily bond is interrupted and major changes are brought about in the modes of subsistence, organization, and family dynamics. As Monclus (2017) puts it, "the imprisonment of these women entails an increase in the vulnerability of their households, if not their dismemberment and the helplessness of the minors" (p. 376). These elements lead to questioning the rationality of the current criminal policy related to women, and lead to consider that there is a disproportion between the penalties they suffer and the damage caused by the crimes attributed to them (CELS et al., 2011).

However, female imprisonment is not only felt differentially outside, but also within the context of confinement itself. This study seeks to explore, describe, and quantify the effects that the experiences of incarceration have on women in prison contexts. For this purpose, we analyze the results of an original database that includes two surveys conducted by the Center for Latin American Studies on Insecurity and Violence (CELIV/UNTREF), in 2013 and 2019, in prisons of the Federal and Buenos Aires Penitentiary System of Argentina. The sample consisted of 845 males and 188 females who participated in the survey in 2013, and 838 males and 200 females in 2019. This data collection format made it possible to recover the voices of the persons deprived of liberty, and getting closer to the reality of the contexts of incarceration possible. In addition, the

studies was carried out in two different time periods, which allows for reading in a comparative and evolutionary key.

In this opportunity, only some factors that illustrate the differential impact will be analyzed, without pretending to exhaust the subject, but rather to contribute to broadening the evidence and knowledge on the subject. Here various dimensions (ties of containment/articulations) and health-wellbeing that intersect with others, such as those linked to the life trajectories with which they arrive at incarceration, and which are understood as factors of exclusion are analyzed. The following are the different dimensions investigated in this article: frequency of visits, access to conjugal visits, types of supplies acquired from visits, depression as a psycho-emotional illness perceived as a result of incarceration, having children and a partner, employment status before detention and the situation of violence perpetrated by their partners.

This article is conceptualized within a theoretical framework that understands gender as a social construction. It is a dynamic concept or non-stable category (Butler, 1990) that makes providing visibility to the inequalities that organize society possible and is the result of historical processes that perpetuate inequities in all spheres of life. These social constructs are susceptible to analysis, debate and, eventually, transformation. Gender inequalities refer to the conditions of hierarchical imbalance and privileges that in society are granted to men and their capacity to exercise power, to the detriment of women and the LGBTI+ population. This is a systemic situation that is reproduced and expressed in a multiplicity of inequalities that place obstacles regarding the access to fundamental rights for women and the LGBTI+<sup>1</sup> population.

## Methodological Considerations

This article is based on primary data produced from the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty conducted by the Center for Latin American Studies on Insecurity and Violence (CELIV), with support from UNDP and IDB in prisons in eight Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru) and in six Caribbean countries (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Bahamas, Barbados, and Suriname), between 2013 and 2019.

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1. Only the male/female gender categories have been used because the databases used only allow the variable to be recorded in this binary form. In other words, the surveys used were conducted only among men and women in incarceration contexts. In this sense, the results of the study leave out part of the population. This is an aspect that should be considered in the future.

The survey was developed by a team of researchers from CELIV — belonging to the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero (UNTREF, Argentina)— based on similar instruments conducted by researchers from CIDE (Mexico), and inspired by the surveys conducted approximately every six years in the U.S. by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The collection tool, which was adapted to the reality of each country by introducing specific questions, consists of approximately 270 closed questions and 460 variables. It was tested in several pilot tests, and technical adjustments have been made considering the specificities of the language commonly used in each of the countries. However, 90% of the questions are common to all cases, resulting in a basis for comparison at the regional level.

This article analyzes only the case of Argentina, which has one of the most recent data sets (2019) and is the only one that allows for temporal comparison (2013-2019), as two surveys have been conducted in different time periods. Both surveys were applied to a representative sample of individuals deprived of their liberty in Argentine prisons from the federal and Buenos Aires systems. The samples are random, representative, and stratified by gender (hence quotas were developed accordingly). Female prisoners, being proportionally fewer, have been overrepresented in the sample in order to achieve a sufficient sample size of this group for subsequent statistical tests. In 2019, a total of 1,038 individuals were interviewed (838 males and 200 females), five more compared to 2013, where the sample consisted of 1,033 cases (845 males and 188 females).

For this paper, descriptive analysis techniques (frequencies and contingency tables) were used to explore gender differences in the effects of confinement. Most of the results are set out graphically (bar charts) and presented in comparative terms; based on gender (male and female) and the year the survey was conducted (2013 and 2019).

## **General and Prevalent Characteristics of Women and Men in the Context of Incarceration in Argentina**

Incarcerated men and women in Argentina differ in terms of the crimes for which they are in conflict with the law. The most frequent reason for which women are imprisoned is linked to drug trafficking and/or possession (49.4% of the cases). On the contrary, men are mostly detained for robbery (43.2%). Likewise, women are involved in less violent types of crime than men. In the first place, they are mostly related to unarmed crimes: 41% of the men indicate that they were carrying a weapon during the criminal act for which they were punished; this percentage is reduced to 24.9% in the case of women. Second, females participate —to a greater extent than males— in crimes where other people were present; that is,

they were not alone (67.4% females vs. 59.1% male). These results highlight the importance of dependency bonds in the development of female criminal behavior (Azaola, 2005; Mullins & Wright, 2003; Yagüe, 2007).

**Table 1.** *General Characteristics of Incarcerated Women and Men in Argentina.*

<b>Argentina - 2019</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Theft	43.2%	25.0%
Homicide	14.3%	8.3%
Drug trafficking/possession	16.7%	49.4%
Sexual offenses	11.1%	1.2%
Other crimes	14.8%	16.1%
Carrying some kind of weapon	41.0%	24.9%
There were more participants in the crime	59.1%	67.4%
In prison for a prior felony	39.4%	21.7%
Have you ever in your life held a gun in your hand?	70.3%	40.5%
In a juvenile center	18.5%	13.8%
Median current age of arrest	30	34

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF).

Women are linked to less violent crimes, and to a shorter history of conflict with the law than men. They are less likely to be repeat offenders (21.7% have been previously incarcerated for another offense, while in males this percentage rises to 39.4%). A smaller proportion of women were in juvenile detention centers (13.8% of females compared to 18.5% of males). Women have had less contact with weapons (40.5% of females have ever had a weapon in their hands compared to 70.3% of males). Furthermore, the data reveal that women have been arrested at a later age than men.



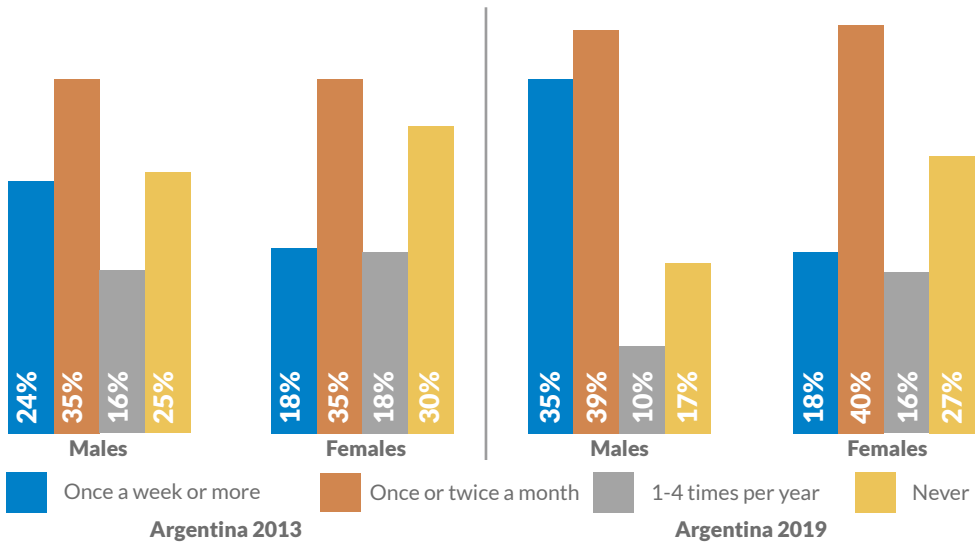
## Differential Impact Based on Evidence from the Data

Imprisonment assumes a differential meaning for women and men: for women, prison is doubly stigmatizing and painful if one takes into account the role that society has assigned to them. A woman who goes through prison is qualified as "bad" because she contravened the role that the imagery confers on her as wife and mother, in terms of her submission, dependence and docility (Antony, 2007). Women who find themselves in conflict with the criminal law obtain greater social scorn than men, since they departed from the prevailing mandate (CELS et al., 2011). The weight of the blame associated with delinquency and social rejection for not having followed the expected gender roles falls on them (Carrillo et al., 2020). Women are not only judged for the crime committed, but also for having violated pre-established gender roles.

**The following sections, based on the data, explore, describe, and quantify some of these incarceration experiences for males and females.**

**Incarcerated Women Suffer Greater Isolation from their Social Environments**  
The so-called "visit" to persons deprived of liberty, apart from being a right, is a fundamental element that contributes to the rehabilitation and social reintegration process (Reyes & Quispe, 2017). The data obtained from the two surveys (2013 and 2019) evidences that males receive visits with a weekly frequency in a higher proportion than females. In 2019, 18% of females received visits "once a week or more," while in males that percentage increases to 35%. Also noteworthy is that 27% of women "never" receive visits, which happens to a lesser extent among men (17%).

### Frequency of Visits within the Prison

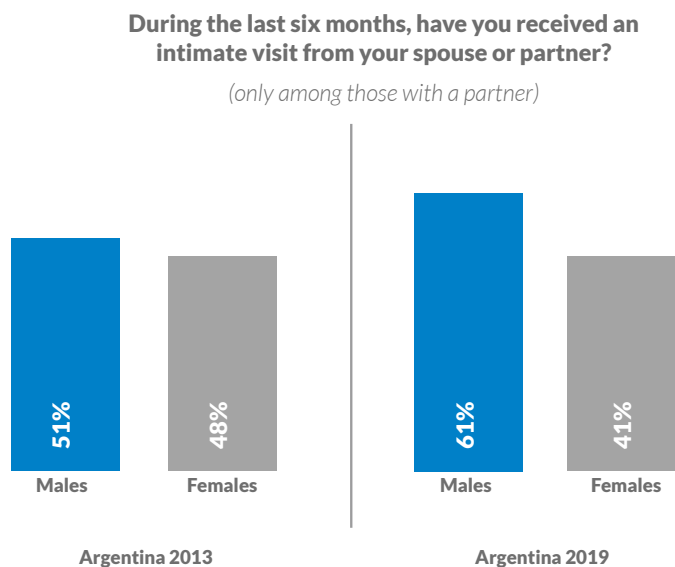


**Figure 1.** *Frequency of Visits within the Prison.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

There is also an outstanding gender divergence regarding conjugal visits. In 2019, in Argentina, 61% of men and 41% of women accessed this modality of contact with the outside. The right to conjugal visitation applies to both men and women, but:

Priority has always been given to the man's "need" to exercise his right to enjoy conjugal visits, and the woman have been displaced [...] it is assumed that women, from the outset, do not want or deserve conjugal visits. (Reyes & Quispe, 2017, p. 222, own translation.)



**Figure 2.** *Persons in Contexts of Confinement Who Received conjugal Visits According to Gender and Year of the Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

The difficulties faced by women in detention in accessing the right to conjugal visits have been highlighted by different authors (Rodríguez, 2003; Antony, 2003). The literature generally indicates that women are subject to more stringent requirements than men in prison, such as proof of partnership, medical examinations and adoption of a family planning method. While men are allowed to define with a wide margin of freedom who is the person who will attend on the days and at the times designated for conjugal visits, women detainees are subject to conditions and obstacles that limit their right to this type of visit (Romero et al., 2014). Although the source explored in this study lacks sufficient data to determine or affirm the causes of the lower access, or to validate that they are linked to restrictions imposed by the institution itself, it does reveal a marked gender difference; at least in terms of the scope of this right.

The information related to family and conjugal visits shows that women in prison in Argentina suffer greater isolation in terms of contact with their families and relatives; many of them do not receive visits or receive them more sporadically than men. A comparative reading of the evidence in a temporal key

(2013-2019) does not allow for observing progress, but rather shows a situation that remains constant over time.

Exploring the reasons for this increased isolation of incarcerated women in Argentina in greater depth is a pending challenge. CELS et al. (2011) draw attention to a specific form of institutional violence against women, which consists of hindering their links with the outside world. From this point of view, the isolation of women would be enhanced due to the specific barriers and difficulties imposed by the institution itself when it comes to receiving visits. In the same vein, it should be noted that, while there are few prison units that house women, the contexts of confinement tend to be, on average, farther away from their homes of origin, which has a direct impact on the possibilities of having visitors (Matthews, 2003).

The latter calls for reflection on public policies and among decision-makers in the different levels of the penal system. The location of prisons and the arbitrary nature of transfers are issues that make it impossible for a large majority of women deprived of their liberty to serve their sentences close to their homes and, consequently, to their affective environments (CELS et al., 2011).

However, in addition to institutional obstacles, mentioning the greater abandonment suffered by women from their own environment is necessary (Galván et al., 2006). Studies carried out in confinement contexts in different countries confirm that women, to a greater extent than men, suffer abandonment by the people most significant to them (Lagarde, 1993; Azaola, 1996; Azaola & Yacamán, 1996; Muraskin, 2000). In this sense, specialists have affirmed that the sentimental partners (spouses or cohabitating partners) give up ties more when it comes to women deprived of liberty than men (Pinto, 1999; Galván et al., 2006). This is evidence of the marked gender role culturally assigned to women in relation to the accompaniment, care, and support of the incarcerated person. When a family member is incarcerated, it is almost always women who play an active role in maintaining the bond (CELS et al., 2011).

There is a vast literature that considers that the abandonment of the affective environment is due to social rejection, a product of the stigma that falls on women in prison for failing to comply with culturally expected gender roles. The reclusion of women is socially perceived as proof of a transgression of social and moral values, so that in the eyes of the social context they are not worthy of support and consideration, but of rejection and exclusion (Azaola, 1996; Galván et al., 2006). In this sense, for example, of note is that women do not usually express shame when accepting that their partners are in prison, while men do not even mention it (Reyes & Quispe, 2017). Being in conflict with the law is, socially, more reproached among women than among men; and it is possible that this is

what is associated with the lower social support received by women in contexts of confinement (Sardinha, 2015).

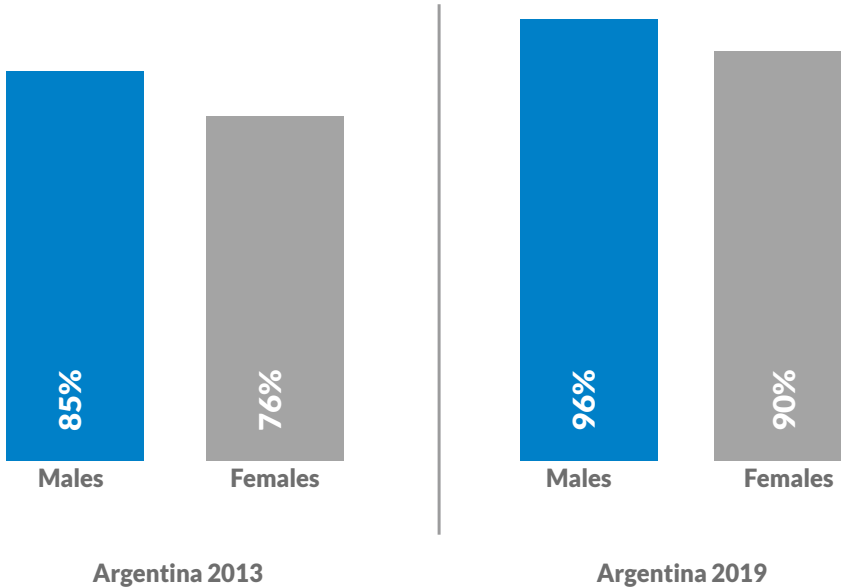
In summary, although tracing the causes and origins that could explain the lower level of support for women in the data analyzed for the purposes of this study is not possible, distinguishing issues that derive from this situation is possible. In Argentina, the fact that women in the context of confinement are more isolated from their environment could be because their own emotional ties abandon them or because they suffer from institutional barriers (greater difficulties in accessing certain rights). Be that as it may, this scenario places them at a disadvantage. On the one hand, it hinders the possibility of accessing the goods that individuals deprived of liberty can only obtain through the support of their family/affective networks. On the other hand, this limitation entails significant emotional damage.

The support of family and friends during incarceration can make a huge difference in the living conditions of women in prison, as it is key to the well-being of the person deprived of liberty (Galván et al., 2006). It has been shown that support and social networks help human beings to find themselves in states of relative well-being, and to overcome stressful events they face during their lives. Social support is defined as "the bonds among individuals or between individuals and groups that serve to enhance adaptation when one faces situations of stress, challenge or deprivation" (Caplan & Killilea cited by Aranda & Pando, 2013 p. 234, own translation). In this framework, social support is presented as a valuable resource during incarceration, which, as shown above, women rely on to a lesser extent than men.

### **Incarcerated Women and Men: Differential Support from the Environment**

The data reveal that the frequency of visits is different between men and women in confinement contexts, and the type of support they receive in each context is different as well. While men report, in a slightly higher proportion, that visitors provide them with food, women indicate that they provide them with money.

### Have you been brought food?



**Figure 3.** *Persons in Context of Confinement to Whom Food Has Been Brought According to Gender and Year of Survey.*

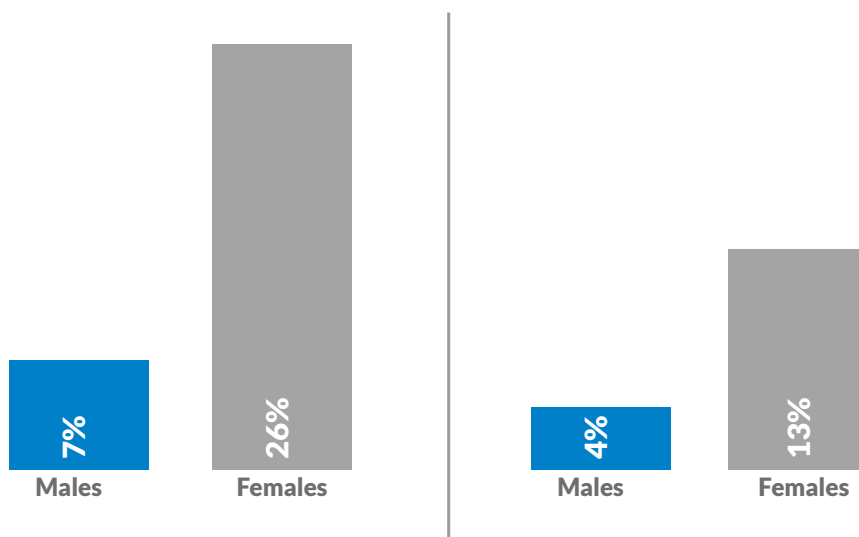
Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

The fact that males receive more food could be linked to traditionally assigned gender roles, where women, who are the ones who visit them, have historically been responsible for daily food; both in terms of food acquisition and food processing (Del Campo & Navarro, 2012). As indicated by studies on this subject, CELS et al. (2011) “in the line of visitors in male prisons we find a greater number of women —spouses or partners, mothers, sisters— and in the line of visitors in female prisons [...] we also find women —mothers, sisters, etc.—” (p. 91, own translation).

Nevertheless, there is a need to explore more fully the reasons why women receive more economic support. This requires special attention, mainly in a context of greater isolation from their social environment; that is, they visit them less, but when they do, they give them money. It is possible that this is linked to

institution-specific issues (such as the possible need to purchase certain goods in women's prisons), but in any case, the data suggest that women receive more material support (money) and less emotional support (the visit itself).

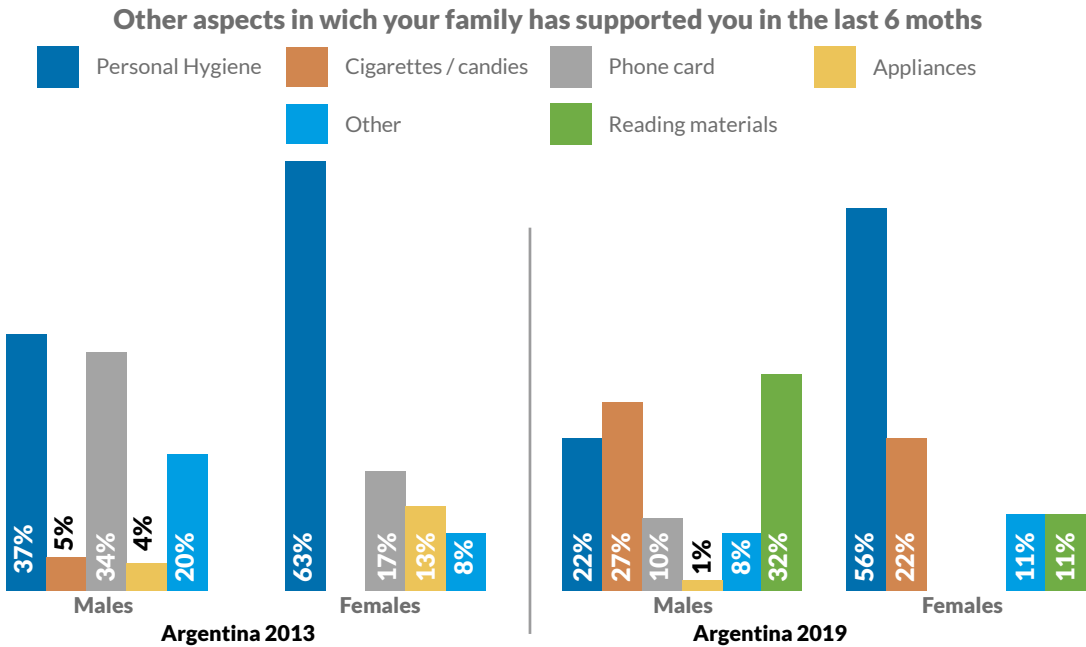
### Have you been brought money?



**Figure 4.** *Persons in Context of Confinement to Whom Money Has Been Brought According to Gender and Year of survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

There are differences between men and women in relation to other aspects in which they receive support from their families. Women are widely noted for receiving products for their personal hygiene. In 2019, more than half of women (56%) indicate that, in the last six months, their family has supported them with products such as deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc. On the other hand, support for men is distributed among reading material (32%), cigarettes/smokes (27%) and personal hygiene (22%).



**Figure 5.** *Persons in Contexts of Confinement Who Received Other Types of Support According to Gender and Year of the Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of individuals deprived of liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

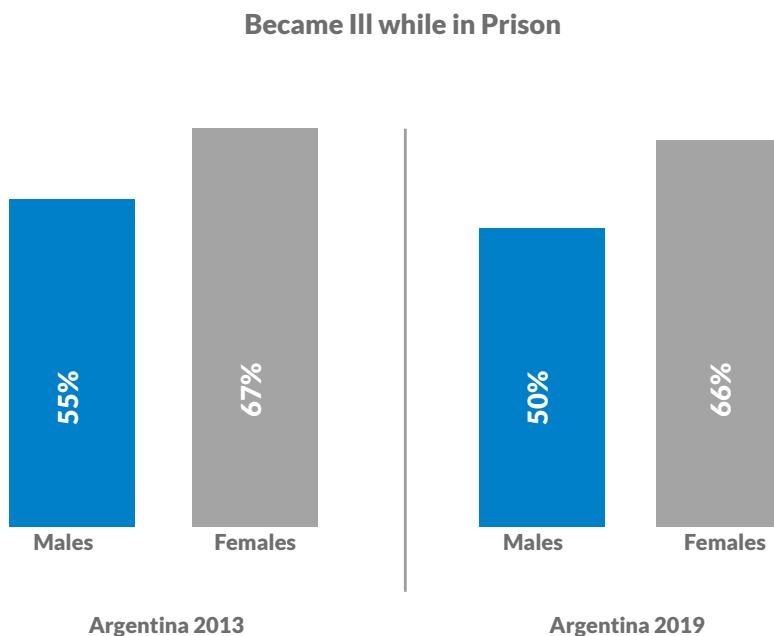
### Women Get Sicker Inside Prison

The data analyzed reveal that women have less social support and experience greater isolation from family and friends. This situation, together with the concern for their children and the loss of the daily exercise of care are some of the causes that lead to a high incidence of psychological problems, situations of self-harm and anxiety crises among women detainees (CELS et al., 2011). In this sense, a 2006 report by the National Institute of Women of Mexico and UNDP indicates that, for women in the context of confinement, "the frustration, guilt, and impotence of not being able to be with their sons and daughters and give them 'the best' constitute another punishment, a double captivity" (p. 62).

Empirical evidence reflects that confinement has a greater impact on women's physical and emotional well-being. Analysis shows that females contract



illnesses in higher proportion than males inside prison; in 2019, 66% report having fallen ill, while this percentage drops to 50% for males.



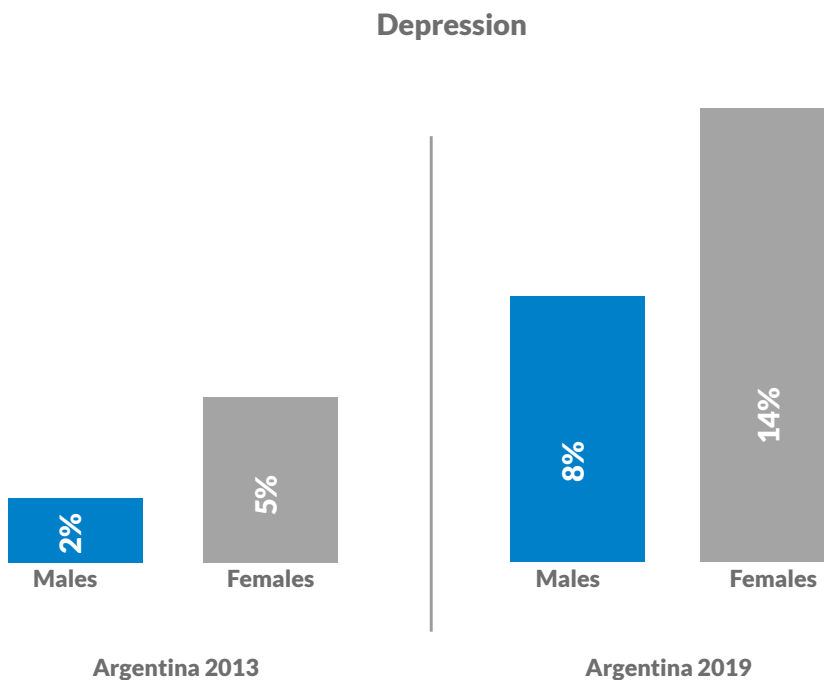
**Figure 6.** *Persons Who Became Ill while in Prison by Gender and Survey Year.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

Likewise, analysis shows that women indicate suffering from depression. This is consistent with previous studies that have indicated that the experience of incarceration has a greater impact on the deterioration of women's mental health and/or psychoemotional state (Antony, 2003; Cárdenas, 2011; Calvo, 2014).

The literature argues that people with mental illness in the context of confinement do not have adequate treatment, beyond the possible confinement in a secluded ward and the exaggerated provision of medication (Lombardo et al., 2016; Alfonsín, 2015). In this sense, another gender-related health care consideration is the abuse of psychotropic drugs for tranquilizing and disciplining purposes that are overprescribed to women (Antony, 2003; Cárdenas, 2011; Calvo, 2014). Vigna's study (2012) in Uruguay shows that the proportion of women taking regular medication is almost double that of men, while the percentage of women taking psychotropic drugs is almost three times higher than that of men. The control exercised by pharmacological means occurs to a greater extent in female prisons than in male prisons (Vigna, 2011). Even, Alfonsín's (2015) study in

the Ezeiza prison of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Argentina demonstrates how the temporary transfer to the Psychiatric Annex is presented for women as a practice of covert sanction, shielded within the medical-psychiatric discourse.



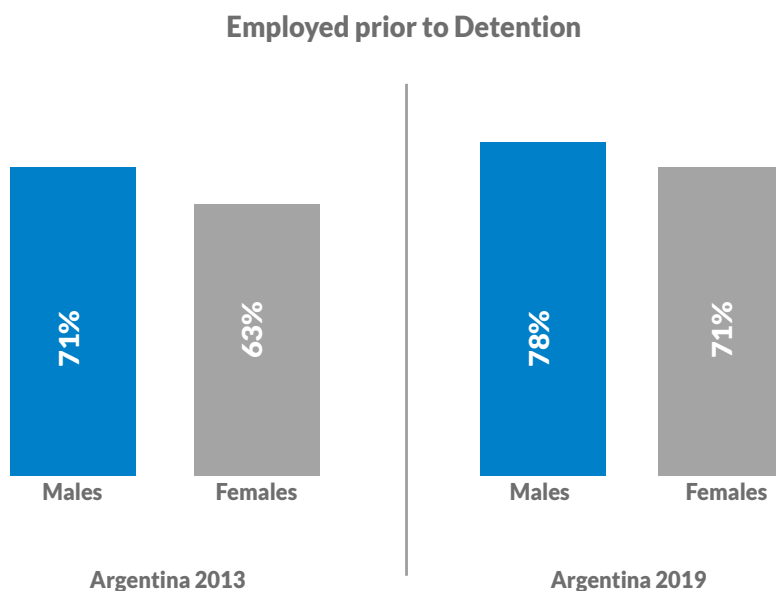
**Figure 7.** *Incarcerated Persons Suffering from Depression According to Gender and Year of the Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

## The Exclusion of Exclusion

Finally, although prison particularly excludes and isolates women deprived of liberty, women were already socially excluded before being convicted (CELS, 2011) is a necessary consideration to be made. In this sense, there are those who allude to the "exclusion of exclusion" (Almeda, 2017). The female population in contexts of confinement is a minority with a history of multiple social exclusions that are exacerbated during their stay in prison (Carrillo et al., 2020).

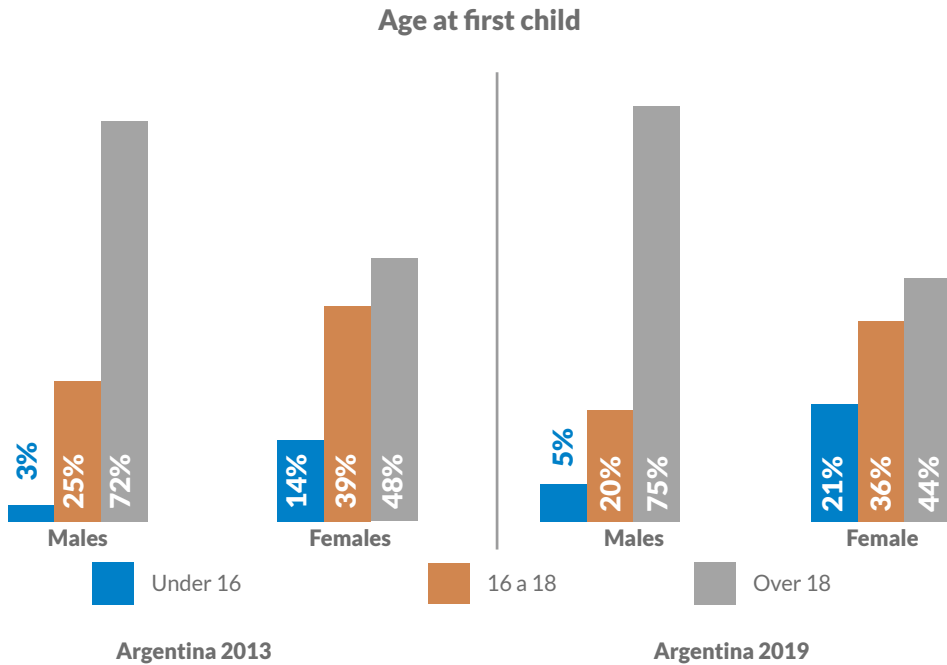
The situation of women, prior to arrest, shows a wide range of vulnerability in relation to men, both in terms of their families and work situations. Data shows that women have a slightly higher level of unemployment than men in the month prior to their arrest.



**Figure 8.** *Incarcerated Persons Who Were Employed prior to Detention According to Gender and Year of the Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

Additionally, incarcerated women are—in a higher proportion than men—adolescent mothers, without a partner and/or with a greater number of children. At the same time, in 2019, 75% of males deprived of liberty had their child when they were over 18 years old; this percentage is reduced to 44% among females. Twenty-one percent of women had their first child under the age of 16 and 36% between the ages of 16 and 18; these percentages are reduced to 5% and 20% respectively among men. A time-slice reading (2013–2019) allows for observing that there is no major progress in this line, but that, on the contrary, a slight increase is observed in regard to early pregnancy among women.

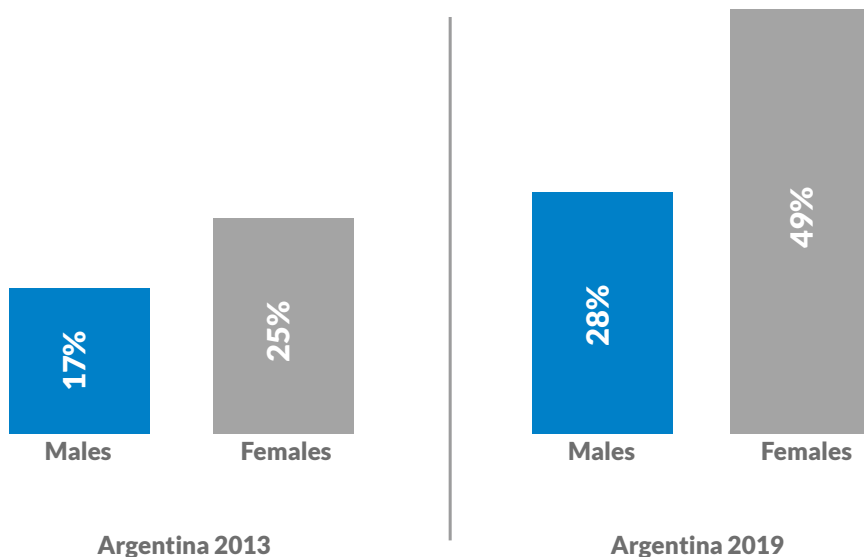


**Figure 9.** *Age at which Incarcerated Persons Had Their First Child According to Gender and Year of the Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

Likewise, 49% of women who have children do not have a partner. Although these data do not allow for asserting that not being in a couple means that the responsibility for caregiving falls exclusively on them. This can possibly be inferred. Several studies conducted in other contexts of confinement highlight the high number of women in prison who are heads of single-parent families, and who are responsible for the children and for sustaining the family unit (Bloom et al., 1994; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Antony, 2007; Ruidíaz, 2011; Azaola, 2005; Calvo, 2014). That crimes committed by women are often directly related to family poverty and the need to care for children has been suggested (Moloney et al., 2009). Single motherhood constitutes a determining factor in the process of social exclusion that leads many women to commit crimes (Calvo, 2014).

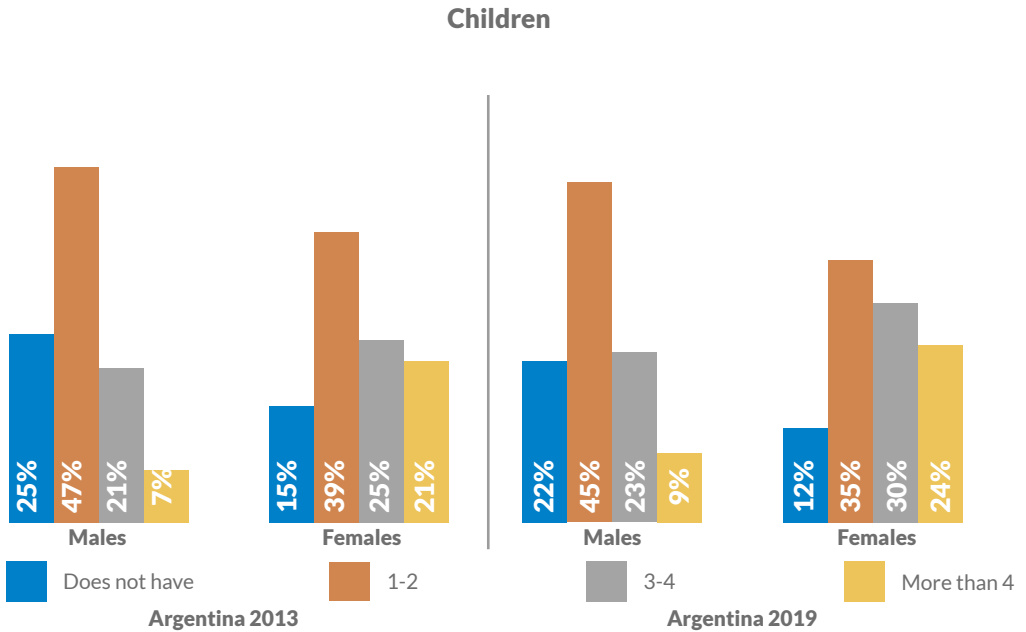
### People Who Have Children and No Partner



**Figure 10.** *Incarcerated People Who Have Children and No Partner According to Gender and Year of Survey.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

Another factor that accentuates women's previous situation of vulnerability is the number of children. In 2019, 24% of women had more than four children, while among men this percentage is reduced to 9%.



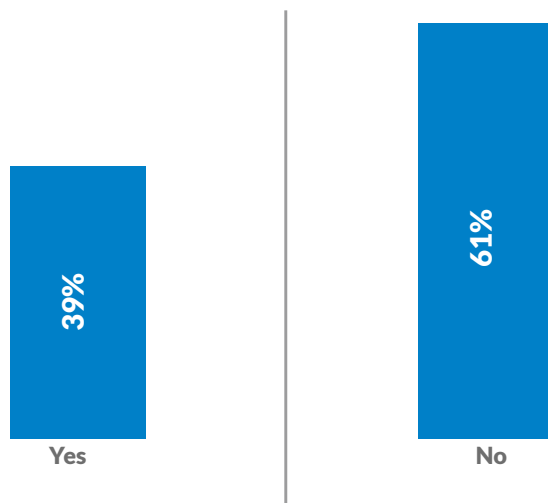
**Figure 11.** Number of Children of Incarcerated Persons According to Gender and Year of the Survey.

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of individuals deprived of liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

Finally, another axis of vulnerability linked to women's history of victimization is highlighted: in the year prior to the arrest, 39% of women had been victims of violence by their partners or ex-partners. This finding is consistent with several studies that reveal that intimate partner violence is an element that is present directly or indirectly in the majority of women in detention (Yagüe, 2007; Igareda, 2006). The high frequency of episodes of sexual abuse, family, and partner abuse in the lives of these women is highlighted (Bloom et al., 1994; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Yagüe, 2007).

## In the last year before your arrest, were you a victim of violence by your partner or ex-partner

(Only women - Argentina 2019)



**Figure 12.** *Incarcerated Women Who Suffered Violence by Their Partner or Ex-partner in the Last Year before Their Arrest.*

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty (CELIV/UNTREF, 2013 and 2019).

## Discussion

This paper started from an original database that includes two surveys conducted by the Center for Latin American Studies on Insecurity and Violence (CELIV/UNTREF) in Argentina, in 2013 and 2019. *The Survey of Individuals Deprived of Liberty* has made it possible to explore and describe the effects that incarceration have on women in prison in two different time periods. The results of this study indicate that there are gender differences in the effects of incarceration on the *inside*, which are mainly crystallized in the behavior of nearby containment networks. For women, contact with their emotional environment is more limited than for men; many women do not receive visits or receive them more sporadically than men. In turn, access to conjugal visits, which involves other types of ties with the outside, poses greater challenges for women. The findings reveal that not only is the frequency of visits different between incarcerated men and women, but also the type of support received by each of them is different.

As has been indicated throughout the article, many of these results are in line with previous studies. Studies conducted regarding various countries' incarcerations confirm that women, more so than men, suffer abandonment by their most significant individuals (Lagarde, 1993; Azaola, 1996; Azaola & Yacamán, 1996; Muraskin, 2000). In this sense, specialists have affirmed that romantic partners desist more often when women are deprived of their liberty than when men are (Pinto, 1999; Galván et al., 2006). From a gender perspective, Galván et al. (2006) point to one possible explanation for this trend. In patriarchal cultures, women are typically responsible for caring for others and overseeing the family's moral values. In the case of women in prison, the behavior that resulted in their incarceration is seen as a violation of social and moral values. Therefore, in the eyes of others, they are not considered worthy of support and consideration but rather of rejection and exclusion. In this context, that the social stigma of women in confinement is greater than that of men is suggested (Galván et al., 2006).

Likewise, data suggest that the poor social support women receive from family and friends impacts their physical and emotional well-being (Galván et al., 2006). Of important note is that this conclusion cannot be directly inferred from the evidence presented in the article. However, it does indicate that women in prison are more likely to develop illnesses and report experiencing depression compared to men. These findings align with previous studies conducted in various confinement context across different countries, which show that the experience of imprisonment has a more significant impact on the deterioration of women's mental health and/or psychoemotional state (Antony, 2003; Cárdenas, 2011; Calvo, 2014). Although the lack of supportive directly causing women's well-being and/or their health status cannot be assumed, it does align with what the literature points out and recognizes as an influencing factor (Fernandez, 2017; Azaola, 1996).

The primary contribution of this article lies in its ability to contrast the findings from theoretical, qualitative, and/or other countries' contributions with those of Argentina, based on a quantitative approach, using a recent and original database. In addition, the observation is made that, in general, previous works on the subject have been carried out at different historical moments. The article highlights that the majority of premises remain relevant even in current confinement contexts.



## Final Thoughts

This study does not aim to exhaust discussions on the subject, but rather to contribute to expanding knowledge, raising questions, and paving the way for new dialogues.

From the gender perspective that guides this article, the need to broaden the gender categories in data collection instruments to address the specificities of the non-binary population in confinement contexts is emphasized. Not doing so implies ignoring the fact that there are people deprived of their freedom with their own demands and problems that are not being considered.

In addition, there are opportunities to improve the quality of life of women who are deprived of their liberty and their supporting environment. The incarceration of women having a significant emotional impact, especially on their children should not be forgotten, as the daily bond is disrupted, and changes are observed in modes of subsistence, organization, and family dynamics. Given the necessity to prevent social disconnection, numerous researchers refer to the urgent need to explore potential alternatives to incarceration and to reconsider prison sentences from a perspective that enables the most vulnerable groups of women to break free from the cycle of condemnation, marginalization, and stigmatization. In this sense, the study highlights the importance of addressing this complex issue, which merits further in-depth research.

One of the primary recommendations arising from the results is the necessity to raise awareness among family members of incarcerated women regarding the significance of promoting and maintaining continuous and permanent contact with them, as this form of support often greatly benefits their physical and emotional well-being. Also crucial, correctional institutions should reconsider the use of visitation suspensions as a form of punishment and control, as such measures entail a range of adverse consequences for both the inmate population and the institution itself. The important thing will be to develop correctional policies with a gender perspective, which take into account the characteristics, needs and demands of incarcerated women through specific measures for them "that allow these women to improve their personal capacities and help them to fully exercise their citizenship rights" (Yagüe, 2007, p. 17).

At the same time, the results suggest an assessment of extreme vulnerability in the trajectories of women in confinement. These life experiences are characterized by limited resources for social inclusion, many of them marked by unemployment, teenage pregnancy and instances of harassment and violence. Against this backdrop, noting that psychological care is crucial is particularly

important, as it is absent in almost all cases (Fernandez, 2017). This can lead to irreversible situations, as shown by studies that conclude that the probability of suicide is five times higher in battered women than in the general population of women (Kurz, 1989). Social welfare policies taking center stage in these environments and manifesting in the living conditions of incarcerated women is crucial, thereby preventing their near hegemonic replacement by the criminalization of poverty (Wacquant, 2001).

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# Social Representations of the *Corralejas* Tragedy of January 20, 1980, Sincelejo, Colombia\*

[English version]

Representaciones sociales de la tragedia de las Corralejas del 20 de enero de 1980, Sincelejo -Colombia

Representações sociais da tragédia das *Corralejas* de 20 de janeiro de 1980, Sincelejo, Colômbia

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**Colombia**

## Abstract

**Objective:** To reveal the Social Representations (SRs) that the population of Sincelejo, department of Sucre, Colombia, has regarding the Corralejas tragedy of 1980, which occurred in that city. **Methodology:** Grounded theory, applied to the analysis of information that was collected from various sources, key informants, and texts found on social networks through videos and comments. Finally, the information was analyzed using Atlas.Ti. **Results:** Six categories were revealed: premonitions or bad feelings, popular stories and legends, isolated rain, human-animal interaction, funerary aspects and cemeteries, and, finally, the central image associated with death, pain and trauma. **Conclusions:** The categories revealed become SRs of tragedy from the concretization of magical thinking, which sought non-rational and less stigmatizing explanations of a tradition that clashes with the modernity, and that has deep cultural roots in the Colombian Caribbean region.

**Keywords:** social representations; magical thinking; bullfighting festivals; *corralejas*; customs and traditions; Colombia; Sincelejo (obtained from the UNESCO thesaurus).

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## Resumen

**Objetivo:** develar las representaciones sociales (RRSS) que la población de Sincelejo, departamento de Sucre, Colombia, tiene sobre la tragedia de las Corralejas de 1980, ocurrida en esa ciudad. **Metodología:** teoría fundamentada, aplicada al análisis de la información que se recopiló de diversas fuentes; informantes clave y textos encontrados en redes sociales a través de vídeos y comentarios. Finalmente, la información se analizó utilizando Atlas.Ti. **Resultados:** se revelaron seis categorías: premoniciones o presentimientos, historias y leyendas populares, lluvia selectiva, interacción humano-animal, aspectos funerarios y cementerios; y, finalmente, la imagen central asociada a la muerte, dolor y trauma. **Conclusiones:** las categorías develadas se convierten en RRSS de la tragedia a partir de la concreción del pensamiento mágico, que buscó explicaciones no racionales y menos estigmatizadoras de una tradición que choca con la Modernidad, y que tiene profundas raigambres culturales en la región Caribe colombiana.

**Palabras clave:** representaciones sociales; pensamiento mágico; fiestas taurinas; corralejas; costumbres y tradiciones; Colombia; Sincelejo (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** revelar as representações sociais (RRSS) que a população de Sincelejo, departamento de Sucre, Colômbia, tem sobre a tragédia das Corralejas de 1980, ocorrida nessa cidade. **Metodologia:** teoria fundamentada, aplicada à análise das informações coletadas de diversas fontes; informantes-chave e textos encontrados em redes sociais, através de vídeos e comentários. Por fim, as informações foram analisadas utilizando o software Atlas.ti. **Resultados:** se revelaram seis categorias: premonições ou pressentimentos, histórias e lendas populares, chuva seletiva, interação humano-animal, aspectos funerários e cemitérios; e, finalmente, a imagem central associada à morte, dor e trauma. **Conclusões:** as categorias reveladas se tornam representações sociais da tragédia a partir da concretização do pensamento mágico, que buscava explicações não racionais e menos estigmatizadoras de uma tradição que confronta a Modernidade e que possui profundas raízes culturais na região do Caribe colombiano.

**Palavras-chave:** representações sociais; pensamento mágico; festas taurinas; corralejas; costumes e tradições; Colômbia; Sincelejo (obtidas do tesoro da UNESCO).

## Introduction

Spanish colonization left a legacy of traditions with the American peoples, and one of them is bullfighting. This was adapted and syncretized in the Latin American context, and gave rise to various bullfighting activities such as *coleo*, *corralejas* and *toropukllay*. This article focuses on the “*Fiesta en Corraleja*”, an activity that evolved from the rural resident’s work on livestock farms to becoming a popular celebration. Although when it stopped being a private practice and became a public event is not known precisely, the practice dates back to 1827, according to the Sucreño journalist José Cisnero Arriaga (Flórez, 2008, p. 153).

The “*Fiesta en Corralejas*” is a popular tradition of the Colombian Caribbean region, which consists of a bullfighting show in which the local population interacts with cattle and horses, animals that arrived in the area because of colonization. This celebration originated mainly in the current departments of Sucre and Córdoba, located in the north of Colombia in an area of coastal savannas where livestock ranches started developing (Hernández, 2014, p. 145). To date, *corralejas* are carried out in 102 municipalities in the departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, Magdalena, and Sucre (Niampira & Barguil, 2021).

Such is the importance that it gained over the years, that the current size of the bullring exceeds up to four times that of any in Colombia (Arrieta & Díaz, 2010, p. 41). For the locals, the festivity is divided between what happens in the arena, and what is taking place in the boxes: Family gatherings, meetings, exchange of drinks, betting and more. All this constantly accompanied by band music and fandango (Turbay, 1995, p. 28). The *Corralejas* were declared Cultural Heritage of the Nation (Law 1272, 2009), despite strong criticism (Hernández, 2013).

Initially, the *corralejas* were held in the Plaza de San Francisco, and this was the case for 85 years (Flórez, 2008, p. 154). However, the date and place changed. Sebastián “Chano” Romero, a prominent member of the traditional society of Sincelejo, proposed changing them to January 20 to commemorate his saint (Fals, 2002b, p. 97). Likewise, the transfer was made to Plaza Majagual because the space in the center was already insufficient. The purpose also changed: from honoring Saint Francis of Assisi, to honoring the “Sweet Name of Jesus,” which in the Christian liturgy is the 3rd of January.

However, on January 20, 1980, a tragedy occurred that marked a before and after in the history of *Las Corralejas*. That day, a wing of the boxes collapsed, causing the death of between 200 and 400 people, although the exact number remains uncertain due to the circumstances and lack of organization at the time.

This unfortunate event generated a series of stories that have become social representations (SRs) of the tragedy.

The dispute remains in collective memory over who would provide the bulls for that January 20 as part of the beginning of the tragedy. Arturo Cumplido, a rancher from the region, used to offer his bulls as a religious promise to the Sweet Name of Jesus (Movilla, 2003). However, the political spokesmen of Pedro Juan Tudela, another rancher, won the dispute and took away the participation of the bulls for the central day of the festival. This act was recorded in the memory of the people and is constantly mentioned when remembering what happened in the *Corralejas* of 1980.

Furthermore, the tragedy was the result of a series of circumstances that revealed the lack of foresight in the face of a large-scale event. Among these, it can be mentioned that the prior evaluation of the land where the boxes were built was deficient, as was the technicalities of the artifact. Likewise, more tickets were sold than capacity allowed. There was also torrential rain that forced spectators to seek shelter in the covered areas, causing an imbalance in the boxes. There was a landslide which exposed the wooden posts and caused the collapse. People on the upper floors fell onto those below, resulting in the numerous deaths and injuries.

The capacity of morgues and hospitals was insufficient to care for the wounded and handle the corpses. Many bodies could not be identified, so a mass grave had to be used. To date, the exact death toll remains imprecise. Given the importance of this celebration and the symbolic, historical, and cultural significance of the event, an investigation has been carried out to analyze the social representations of the citizens of Sincelejo, regarding the tragedy of January 20, 1980.

Due to the relevance of the event and its unusualness, apart from its tragic element, January 20, 1980 is remembered by the inhabitants of Sincelejo; both by those who experienced the event firsthand and those who learned about it from the stories of its actors. In this sense, revealing the SRs that the inhabitants of Sincelejo have regarding the tragedy of "*Las Corralejas de 1980*" is proposed.

Keeping in mind that the epistemological foundation is based on Moscovici (1979) is important. He clarifies that SRs are almost tangible. This is because most of the SRs that an individual establishes are loaded with representations, due to the symbolic implications they entail and the practice they develop repeatedly as a ritual. Thus, by giving SRs meaning, the individual internalizes them and makes them his/her own (Moscovici, 1979, p. 38).

Consequently, SRs require experience and its cognitive appropriation that gives them meaning. If this experience is also ritualized, it becomes a belief system that is difficult to detach from and analyze. SRs can be said to be complex conglomerates that cover cognitive, emotional, social and, sometimes, physical

aspects, which are integrated into a single notion or concept associated with events, situations, entities or even objects, either individually or combined. These phenomena, which Jodelet (1986, p. 475) defines as “objects,” can have roots in the mythical or the imaginary realms. In the specific context that concerns this article, the question arises: How have the SRs around the Corralejas tragedy of January 20, 1980 been configured and kept alive?

Clarifying that the link between theories of collective memory and SRs is significant in at least three aspects is also important. First, collective memory and social representation share similarities, since both are symbolic constructions rooted in diverse social and cultural groups. Second, collective memory maintains the continuity of social categories of action when creating a social representation of an object. Third, Moscovici (1979) suggests that SRs are analyzed through the definition of a subject and an object of representation. Who represents what? In the study of collective memory, the same initial approach can be adopted. Who remembers what? (de Alba, 2012).

## Methodology

In this qualitative study, grounded theory was used as a methodology to “obtain complex details of some phenomena, such as feelings, thought processes and emotions, difficult to extract or apprehend by more conventional research methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 2002, p. 21). In essence, this method has three components: First, data are obtained through various means: interviews, participant observation, documents, records, and films; second, the data is organized and interpreted through the procedures chosen by the researchers that involve coding them and establishing relationships amongst them; finally, the report is written and submitted to the scientific community.

In this sense, information was collected from various sources, including key informants who met the following criteria: people who had experienced the tragedy firsthand and people who, although had not been there, remembered the event because they had heard about it from their childhood. In addition, there was a body of texts collected on social networks such as Facebook, YouTube (videos and comments on those videos), news, testimonies on the web and books published about the January 20<sup>th</sup> *Corralejas* tragedy that tangentially addressed the topic.

Techniques such as in-depth interview and focus group were used to collect information (coded as SP and placed in italics). In this case, double interviews were

carried out with the same informants until saturation was reached. The analysis of the corpus was carried out based on coding, and the Atlas.Ti software was used.

Of note: Grounded Theory is not opposed to the theory of social networks, but rather, both can be intertwined and complement each other. In this sense, Jodelet (1986) argues that SRs, as phenomena, manifest themselves in various ways that shows their versatility and multiplicity in the social and cultural sphere.

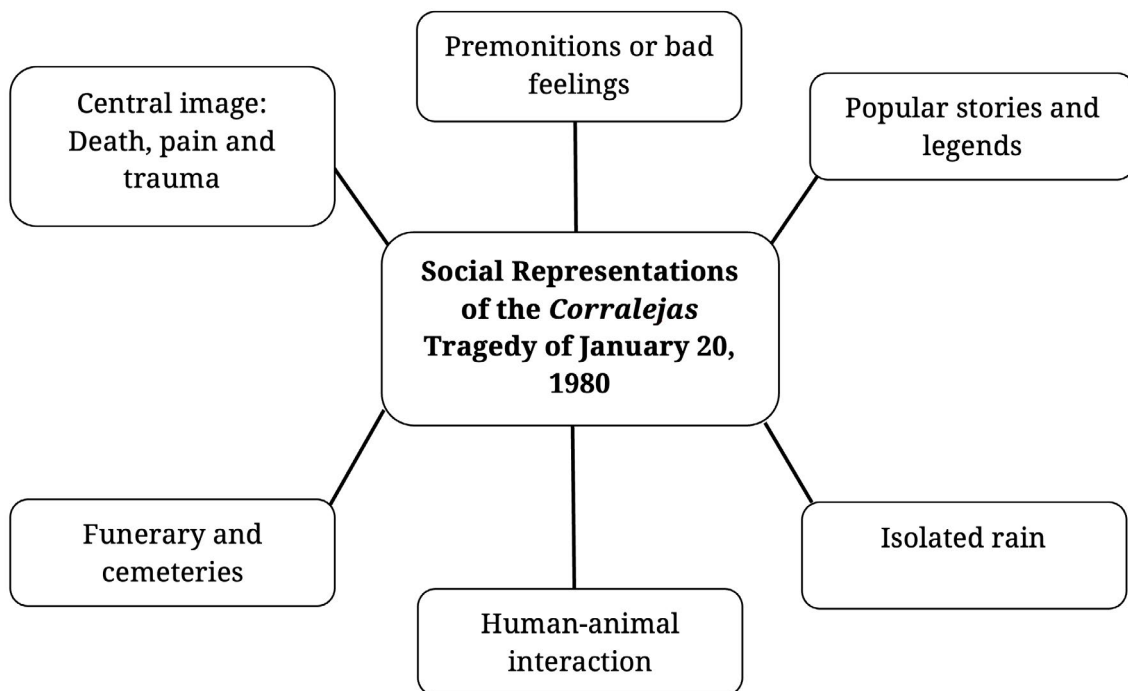
Images that condense a set of meanings, reference systems that allow us to interpret what happens to us, and even give meaning to the unexpected, categories that serve to classify circumstances, phenomena, and individuals with whom we have something to do, and theories that allow facts to be established about them. And often, when understood within the concrete reality of our social life, SRs are all of these together. (p. 472, own translation).

In this way, Grounded Theory, with its distinctive inductive approach, enables an in-depth exploration of social networks, facilitating the identification of patterns, categories and emerging meanings associated with them. This methodology also allows understanding underlying meanings, such as images that synthesize various meanings and categories that classify circumstances, phenomena, and individuals.

Within the framework of this research, the data obtained through the various techniques and resources previously mentioned, were explored with the aim of identifying a set of categories. These are intended to reveal the collective imagination associated with the object of study, and allow a deeper and more structured understanding of the shared perceptions and conceptions around this topic.

## Results

From the information collected and analyzed, six categories have been identified (Figure 1) that are considered part of the SRs of the inhabitants of Sincelejo regarding the tragedy. These categories serve to label collective memory and to appropriate a devastating event. The analysis of the research related to each of the categories is presented.



**Figure 1.** Identified Categories that Constitute the SRs of the 1980 Corralejas Tragedy.

### **Premonitions or Bad Feelings**

Below, evidence is presented that offers a detailed vision of the events and circumstances that surrounded the Corralejas tragedy, and that generated popular beliefs around it.

Movilla (2003) states that there were three warnings that indicated that a tragedy was going to occur at the *Corralejas* festivals: 1) "The torrential downpour of that day, January 20, 1980, left a feeling that something was going to happen at the festival of The Sweet Name of Jesus" (p. 27, own translation); 2) "politics took over all the coastal *Corralejas*" (p. 35, own translation); and, 3) the fact that they had "taken away" the bulls from Arturo Cumplido (p. 42, own translation).

Rural residents without political malice thought that the disruption of tradition was a bad omen. And on the 20th, they went to the bullfight with the feeling, hidden behind their brows, that something disastrous was going to happen at the *Corraleja*. (Movilla, 2003, p. 126).

"Some events preceded the festivities of 1980 that have given rise to conjectures on the part of the people of Sincelejo. Arturo Cumplido promised, since 1962, to the "Sweet Name of Jesus" to bring the bulls every January 20 until the day of his death. That year the board denied him the day and it was awarded to Pedro Juan Tulena, which is why the people of Sincelejo feared a tragedy that day." (El Cenit, February 11, 1980. Para. 2, own translation).

A victim of the tragedy narrates:

"I remember that at that time [...] it could have been six in the morning, yes, a neighbor passing by was telling all of us who were outside not to go to *Corraleja* because that day the boxes were going to fall." (It's always rains in January 2021, 0m25s, own translation).

*My little brother and I had a chicken, and it was black, and she [aunt] was dressing me up. The little chicken starts to go around and around me and my little brother. They were dressing me up before going to the Corralejas, the one who dressed me up was Nurys. Then she picked up the chicken and threw it in the hallway "go bother over there." About an hour after my sister threw the chicken it died. They say that he picked up the dead man who was my father, that is, a tragedy was going to happen in the house and my father did not die. (SP22, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).*

The cited texts reveal various indications and conjectures about the tragedy in Las Corralejas. First, what Movilla stated about the three warnings that anticipated the disaster; the supernatural events, such as the one narrated by the informant SP22, and the story commented on social networks about the omen of a stranger. Thus, a series of events emerged that generated a premonition in the community of Sincelejo, and that arose from considering the disruption of tradition as a dire omen.

## **Popular Stories and Legends**

Below is the information collected from the informants that sheds light on the events that preceded the tragedy at the *Corralejas* festivals.

*As usual, January 20 was a special date for Arturo Cumplido, they denied him that day, January 20, they gave it to another rancher, and that day it rained only in the Corraleja that the boxes fell and there were many deaths. Then they said he had a pact with the devil and they gave that date again to Arturo Cumplido. Supposedly he had a pact with the devil, that's what they said. (SP16, personal communication, August 2, 2022, own translation).*

*My father, who at that time was a band musician, tells me that it was horrible, that the dead fell into the pots where they fried food and so on, and he also tells me that that day it only rained in that area where the Corralejas were and also says that that day they were not going to throw out Arturo's bulls since that guy had a pact with the devil. I still don't understand how they celebrate that day with pride, knowing that so many people died. (SP10 personal communication, July 15, 2022, own translation).*

*I studied with one of Arturo Cumplido's sons. According to the legend that they told me, the accident had already occurred some time ago when I asked them: Hey, is it true? What they say your dad? That the Corralejas fell because they didn't give him the bull day? And he tells me: "Man, Beatri, according to legend and according to what I was able to hear from my father, they said that he had a pact with the Devil, because every January 20, the Corralejas were his. That time they did not give the Corralejas to Arturo Cumplido, but rather they gave them to him on the 22nd, and he said either they give them to him on the 20th or he won't launch a bull." (SP22 personal communication, September 22, 2022).*

The shot, in the initial moments, is a pan over the sky that is getting dark, as if to mean that something is going to happen. The panning is in the Mochila bullfighting ring. The gray tone gradually turns dark gray until it's black. Some lightning, captured on camera, resembles the horns of a gigantic bull. The horns can be seen on the screen at least three times. (Video referred to by Movilla, 2003, p. 130, own translation).

Peasants without political malice thought that the disruption of tradition was a bad omen. And on the 20th, they went to the bullfight with the feeling, hidden behind their brows, that something disastrous was going to happen in the Corraleja. (Movilla, 2003, p. 126, own translation).

The evidence collected reveals a series of beliefs and rumors that surrounded the Corralejas tragedy and that were shaped into popular legends of the region. According to testimonies, Arturo Cumplido, a local rancher, was denied the privilege of providing the bulls on January 20. There is speculation among the population of Sincelejo that Cumplido had a pact with the devil, and that his denial of the day of the bulls led to the tragedy. This idea is reinforced with the



story of the video captured during the event that showed suggestive images, like lightning that resembled bull horns.

## Isolated Rain

The information obtained from the informants reveals an interesting and complex related phenomenon: the occurrence of isolated rain.

January 20, traditional day, packed to bursting, there was no chance of the sky becoming overcast with rain at all, splendid sun, monumental sun. I think that around 3:30 in the afternoon the sky began to cloud, and it became cloudy and cloudy, but it was a cloud over the sector [...] that of the bullfighting ring. And it begins to apply pressure and it rains in torrents, without stopping, it rains and rains and it unleashes a superb, tremendous downpour, not a regular storm, a real downpour, really. (Gómez, 2020, 2m34s) (own translation).

*The cloud is positioned [...] it is fixed on the Corraleja.* (Gómez, 2020, 3m5s) (own translation).

*[...] and that day it rained only and so much in the Corraleja, that the boxes fell.* (SP16, personal communication, August 2, 2022, own translation).

*When I arrived here at the house, it was not raining, it had not rained here, that is true, it did not rain here.* (SP20, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).

Movilla (2003, pp. 129-131) publishes the story attributed to a former member of a security organization now abolished from Colombia, who claims that he found himself in an operation related to satanic sects in Sincelejo, a video of the day of the tragedy never made public:

The shot, in the initial moments, is a pan over the sky that is getting dark, as if to mean that something is going to happen. The panning is over the Mochila bullfighting ring. The gray tone gradually turns dark gray until it's black. Some lightning, captured on camera, resembles the horns of a gigantic bull. The horns can be seen on the screen at least three times. It seems that the cameraman knows what is going to happen because by panning he searches the sky for the signal. Much of the film focuses on the space above the Corraleja, because the ceilings of the boxes are left at the bottom of the screen, as a background that confirms the stage. The filming, according to the angles, was done from one of the sides of the construction that did not fall. You can see when the rain falls and perhaps with the boxes very close to falling, the filming is interrupted and then the view of the collapsed boxes continues, just as they appeared in the newspaper photos.

This evidence adds an additional level of complexity, as testimonies indicate that rain played a crucial role in the event, but in an unusual and focused way. The stories highlight that the rain only affected the space where the Corraleja was

located, while in other surrounding areas there was no rainfall. These observations suggest a localized rain, which raises questions about its origin and nature among the residents. The idea of supernatural rain is reinforced with the story of the former member of a security agency about the hidden video that shows a pan of the sky gradually darkening over the *Corraleja*, with lightning that resembles the horns of a gigantic bull.

### Human-animal Interaction

The interaction between humans and animals has been the subject of study in various scientific disciplines and, in particular, the relationship between humans and bulls in cultural events such as the Corralejas has aroused interest and debate. Among the numerous testimonies collected, evidence has been repeatedly identified regarding the bulls that were in the arena at that time and how they were petrified, showing an unusual and unexpected reaction to human presence.

*I threw myself to the sand and the bulls stayed still because I passed by them. There were three bulls, I passed by them, three black bulls. I was scared when I passed by them, but no, they stayed still, people were passing by and I passed by them, I found them in front of me.* (SP20, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).

*That was total panic, people desperate to get away. There is a case of a friend who was in a side box, she was young and very active, a quite empowered woman as they would say now, and she jumped from the second level, she jumped into the ring, she fell in front of a bull and the bull did nothing to her, she moved and left.* (SP11, personal communication, August 3, 2022, own translation).

Suddenly, I heard the roar, and I sat down. The first thing I did was put my hands on my legs to see that I had them. I was scared when I realized that I was inside the square where the four Miura bulls were, but they were petrified. They did not move from their place. (Merlano, 2022, p. 114) (own translation).

*Even the bulls themselves were surprised. Not even the bulls moved. It were as if they were surprised too.* (SP16, personal communication, August 2, 2022, own translation).

According to these stories, the bulls that remained motionless and petrified in the presence of people who passed near them is a constant. Testimonies describe how the black bulls stood still when people walked past them, even in front of them. A specific case is mentioned in which a person threw herself into the ring in front of a bull and it did not harm her. Another witness recounts how the bulls did not move from their spot despite the commotion and noise in the bullfighting ring.

## **Funerary and Cemeteries**

As part of the SRs of the 1980 tragedy, the evidence presented below sheds light on the dynamics of the events, focusing on the issue of burials and the deep significance that the cemetery acquired as a sacred setting after the tragedy.

*But we were still able to limp out to the corner, and since it was the only cemetery that existed at that time, you could see a long procession of coffins, one after the other. I can say that there were more people than in the Corralejas themselves, because there was... there was a barbaric tidal wave. (SP20, personal communication, September 22, 2022).*

*They [coffins] were seen one after another, and it was not that the situation was that one coffin arrived and then 20 minutes later, another, no; it was one coffin after another. You could see the line at the top, they carried it on their shoulders, that's why you could see each other, they were almost close together and many people on the sides. (SP21, personal communication, March 5, 2022, own translation).*

*With reasons, the undertakers could not cope, I cannot blame the undertakers. Imagine burying 300 people in a single day, it seems like a barbaric record to me and then the smell that was felt from 300 dead was barbaric, the smell came out of the cemetery. The mayor's office was very good on the matter, they would use their chemicals and start the parts that were bad, badly buried. Many, many dead people. (SP21, personal communication, March 5, 2022, own translation).*

*There are historical moments in the Sincelejo cemetery that have confused us, in addition to the mental confusion, the pain, the spirituality that has affected us greatly, when the mass burials took place.*

*When we approached the cemetery to look for friends to be with them and we saw so many coffins in front of the cemetery that we couldn't even enter [...] That was impressive, that is, it seemed that the Sincelejo cemetery was waiting for all its inhabitants to arrive, it seemed that the cemetery was talking.*

*How all Sincelejans suffered with that event, then looking at those holy places, a sacred place and one feels it to be beautiful in the sense that in the first place, and saying that there is nothing anymore, where it is an inert body, but the same sense of the object being talked about gives it spirituality. (SP02, personal communication, February 12, 2022, own translation).*

The cemetery became a significant space in the *Corralejas* tragedy and acquired sacred importance for the community. It was the scene where the collective rite was carried out, in which the people said goodbye to the deceased, and the mourners expressed their mutual condolences. El *Charcón* street, which connected the church with the Sincelejo Central Cemetery, became a procession of coffins. A witness recounts how he witnessed a long line of coffins, one after another, stretching along the street. The crowd was overwhelming, with an even larger attendance than in Corralejas themselves. These testimonies reveal the complexity and emotional burden associated with this crucial aspect of the traumatic experience.

### **Central Image: Death, Pain, and Trauma**

To obtain the central memory, a review of all the speeches collected throughout the research was carried out. Specifically, the interviewees were asked the following question: *When you remember the Corralejas of 1980, what is the first thing that comes to mind?* Here are some of the answers:

*A lot of pain and anguish was experienced that afternoon, my friend Luz Marina lost two sisters that fateful afternoon, and her mother from that day on, was never the same. For all that I do not share this Corralejas party, they remind me of pain, a lot of pain and sadness. (SP17 personal communication, July 7, 2022, own translation).*

*Today, after that horrible day, where the blood and mud were caked on my new clothes, and in the midst of so much pain, the terrifying screams of those who were lying under the boards asking for help to be taken out. They died trampled by the human stampede. Agony, of those who wanted to save themselves [...]. I remember seeing many who did not help, but rather took advantage of it to rob even those who asked for help, sadness that amid so much pain the heart of many were not moved. I remember that I got on a truck that was picking up the injured or dead and we took them to the hospital and came back again, this was horrifying. (SP21, personal communication, March 5, 2022, own translation).*

*They threw out the dead people like they were pigs, I was about 10 years old when that happened, they threw them out the doors of the house like pigs. Around my house, about five families had a dead person each, the police trucks threw them like that. (SP22, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).*

*I was inside the Corraleja [...] when they collapsed. We were stunned for a while and then I went to help with the wounded, but I was nervous. I found a bottle of brandy and I drank half a bottle for my nerves and started helping to look for relatives and other people. I saw it up close, such mortality, people asking for help and others already deceased. (SP09, personal communication, March 18, 2022, own translation).*

*When I remember the Corraleja of 1980, I remember all the things I experienced because I was a girl, and you know that when you are a child, the disaster that occurred is recorded in you: Deaths, people mourning, dead family, the people who even remained "unnamed" because they did not know what countries they were from. People came from many countries, so there in the cemetery there remain people who were never claimed because they did not know if they were in Colombia. January 20 was an immense thing, very important even for the country, then tragedy comes to me that's why I don't like Corralejas, they seem like an archaic, old thing, from old times, from the last century (SP22, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).*

*I saw how the children were skewered on [the stakes] [...] that's why I don't like Corralejas, to me they seem like an archaism, from old times and I saw how the children were fried, the pots, little children, one-, two-years-old. (SP22, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).*

*My mother, upon hearing the noise and sirens of the cars carrying the wounded, ran to the hospital to help care for the wounded. At that moment, she could not leave me anywhere else but take me with her. I can't forget that image, I have always thought about drawing it. When we passed the door after the reception, there were the dead, one after another in the hallway, covered with sheets. A policeman and a nun were talking next to the dead, there was one with his face uncovered. He was a dark-skinned man with a sharp nose. His face was bloodied. The shock was such, that I will never forget it. I don't remember anything else about that day. My mother left me with the nuns and went to tend to the wounded, a slaughter. (SP26 personal communication, July 26, 2022, own translation).*

Around me I saw dead, wounded people, crying. I got nervous, I got up and ran to flee the place and I came to a small bridge. I looked back and could see the boxes that had fallen. The scene was gruesome. At that moment was when I started to feel strong pain in my chest, but I had no injuries. I felt another pain in my left heel caused by a wound. (Merlano, 2022, p. 115) (own translation).

First, the testimonies reveal the theme of trauma and emotional pain as dominant elements in the participants' memories. The losses of loved ones and the lasting impact on the lives of those affected are mentioned repeatedly, and the suffering experienced is evident.

Second, violence and death are highlighted as intrinsic aspects of the Corralejas, where testimonies describe graphic scenes of people being trampled, skewered on stakes and dying in the middle of the crowd. These stories convey the brutality that was experienced that fateful day. Third, a sense of dehumanization is observed in the testimonies, since the bodies of the victims were treated as objects or animals. There are cases of bodies thrown like pigs, and of unidentified people who were not claimed. This phenomenon reflects a loss of dignity and respect toward those affected.

## Discussion

From the study of the social networks of the inhabitants of Sincelejo, regarding the *Corralejas* tragedy of 1980, six categories were identified that reflect the beliefs, perceptions, and collective memories associated with this event. These categories emerge through the analysis of the evidence collected, and provide a detailed vision of the SRs around the tragedy.

In this sense, social networks play a fundamental role in the interpretation and understanding of momentous events in a community. In this case, popular beliefs, testimonies, and empirical evidence allow individuals to make the physical and social reality that surrounds them intelligible. The SRs about the Corralejas tragedy are connected, in this case, with magical thinking, conceived as

Characteristic of man's external behavior to achieve control of nature, promoting the realization of his desires, but also serves to achieve mastery over himself by reducing anxiety, resorting to magical thinking that allows him to control what

he perceives as uncontrollable. (Petra-Micu & Estrada-Avilés, 2014, p. 29, own translation).

In this way, the society of Sincelejo of 1980, whose features contradict modernity, or, as Hernández (2013) says: "the premises of modernity have never been fully appropriated" (p. 159), rely on the powers of the imagination to construct narratives and symbols that helped them make sense of the unexplained.

### **Premonitions or Bad Feelings**

For the people of Sincelejo, the tragedy in the *Corralejas* was surrounded by signs and premonitions that awakened the belief in a bad omen caused by the upheaval of tradition as a warning of imminent danger. These beliefs and superstitions rooted in the community, highlight the role of social networks in the interpretation of events and in the construction of shared meanings. The study of these phenomena allows understanding how individuals make reality intelligible, and how collective beliefs influence the perception and anticipation of transcendental events. In this context, SRs emerge as an organized body of knowledge derived from magical thinking that allows individuals to integrate into their social environment, interpreting the physical and social reality in which they are immersed.

Although modernity is distinguished by adopting a rational, scientific, reflective, and analytical perspective, different forms persist "of profane mystification, as well as expressions of rituality that, under multiple modalities, are evident in the secularized environment" (Machuca, 2015). In this order of ideas, Johnson (2015) affirms that the modern world has not completely "disenchanted"; magical thinking is still present despite globalization and the dizzying advances in science and technology.

### **Popular Stories and Legends**

These popular stories and perceptions reinforce the idea that Arturo Cumplido and the Corralejas tragedy were enveloped in a mysterious and superstitious atmosphere. Mainly because it is speculated that Cumplido had a pact with the devil, and the denial he was subjected to regarding the delivery of the bulls generated the fall of the boxes, which became a symbolic explanation to understand a tragic event. Likewise, prior warnings, such as the torrential downpour and the

politicization of the festivities, fueled the perception of a bad omen and generated expectations of a disastrous event.

These stories and popular beliefs reveal the fundamental role of social networks in the interpretation and construction of meaning through the creation of symbolic narratives to understand and explain transcendental events. These SRs, rooted in the collective imagination, allow individuals to make the physical and social reality that surrounds them intelligible, as well as integrate them into a group and with them, establish daily exchange relationships. Consequently, the study of SRs in the context of historical and cultural events reveals the complex interaction between shared knowledge, beliefs, and individual and collective psychic processes.

In this sense, on many occasions, people act far from logic and rationality. Instead, they opt for superstitions, prejudices, quackery practices, horoscopes, and magical rituals, among others (Pérez, 2004), which contradict rational logic and position themselves in magical thinking to respond to extraordinary situations. For this reason, the testimonies cited here maintain the tendency to favor information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs about objective and verifiable facts, which leads to decisions and behaviors in everyday life being more influenced by personal beliefs than by objective and reliable data.

### **Isolated Rain**

These findings point to the existence of an unusual meteorological phenomenon and suggest the presence of symbolic and supernatural elements associated with the tragedy. The isolated rain, concentrated only on the *corraleja* area, raises questions about its origin and possible influence on the event. Furthermore, in the video referred to by Movilla (2003), a visual narrative is revealed that hints at a connection between the dark sky, the lightning that resembles bull horns, and the subsequent fall of the boxes. These visual and symbolic elements awaken the imagination and speculation about the existence of supernatural forces involved in the tragedy.

However, keeping in mind that the analysis of social networks does not aim to provide definitive or scientific answers to the phenomena studied, but rather to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and meanings that arise in a specific community is important. In the case of the tragedy in the Corralejas, the SRs reveal the complexity and richness of popular interpretations around isolated rain and its possible relationship with supernatural forces.



In the three emerging categories identified: premonitions or bad feelings, popular stories and legends, and isolated rain, a marked predominance of magical thinking over rational thinking is observed. A clear example of this is the engineering explanation for the collapse of the *Corralejas*, attributed to specific factors such as: (1) the intense rain that fell that afternoon, (2) which weakened the foundations of the structure, and (3) the overload of the structure caused by the excessive sale of seats. However, faced with this technical explanation, the collective imagination chooses to attribute the tragedy to supernatural causes, which highlight the persistence of mythical beliefs and explanations in the understanding of events.

## Human-animal Interaction

Human-animal interaction during the *Corralejas* has revealed "extraordinary" phenomena, such as the petrification of bulls in the face of human presence. Testimonies collected during the tragedy provide evidence of bulls remaining motionless in the proximity of people, even in dangerous situations, and raise questions about the possible reasons behind this unexpected behavior.

In this framework, it is necessary to bring up Martínez (2018):

The connection of the bourgeois elites of Sincelejo with the cultural practices of the *Corralejas*, shows a particular ambiguity that occurs in the process of Latin American modernity, in comparison with the European phenomenon. The idea of modernity and progress calls for the disappearance of strong emotions as a manifestation of civility, a premise that cannot be fully addressed by the elites of Sincelejo, by maintaining their attachment to the enjoyment of bullfighting, death and "barbarism." (p. 174, own translation).

The relationship between man (street vendors, cape makers, bullfighters) with the bull, manifests an identification of strength, virility, and bravery. At these parties, both experts and inexperienced, confront the animal and challenge it to attack them. However, there is also a manifest rejection on the part of a sector of the population, as stated by interviewee SP22:

The rancher throws [money] only and exclusively when the bull is down there, underneath it, he throws it at the bull, then people run, that is a danger, and it seems to me that it is even a murder by part of the rancher. (SP22, personal communication, September 22, 2022, own translation).

## Funerary and Cemeteries

The stories reveal the symbolic importance of the cemetery as a place of collective meeting and expression of mourning. The fact that the cemetery was packed with coffins and that the community gathered around this striking image, demonstrates the human need to impart collective meaning to suffering and loss. The cemetery becomes a sacred space where emotions are channeled, and a spiritual bond is established with deceased loved ones.

The image of the procession of coffins and the daunting task of burying so many people in a short period of time highlights the magnitude of the tragedy and the emotional impact it had on the community. The smell of the cemetery impregnated with the presence of 300 lifeless bodies adds a sensory dimension to the pain and mourning experienced.

For Torres (2006), funeral rituals “represent the ways of life of a society, with the expression of eternal truths, achieving the establishment of unity and cultural integration” (p. 109, own translation) and its objective is to provide a framework, organization and meaning to human life through regular, formal and participatory ceremonies, which are distinguished by their close relationship with symbolic elements. Many people from different cultures find in these practices a way to impart meaning to an act of life, intending for it to have a transcendental scope. Therefore, the act concerns the person who performs it, and also collectivizes the action through a shared meaning, and reinforces values such as solidarity and unity (Acosta et al., 2023).

Ultimately, this evidence highlights the importance of funeral rituals and sacred spaces in the construction of the social representation of death and mourning. The cemetery becomes a place of collective gathering and spiritual transcendence, where the community finds comfort and a sense of continuity in the midst of pain and loss. The study of these SRs in the context of the Corralejas of Sincelejo, shows the importance of funeral rituals as fundamental elements for the reconstruction of the social fabric and the elaboration of mourning in moments of collective tragedy.

## Central Image: Death, Pain, and Trauma

The testimonies reveal that the experience of the Corralejas of 1980 in Sincelejo was marked by death, pain, and trauma, since they still reflect the emotional impact caused by the loss and suffering experienced by those affected. In addition, graphic scenes of violence and death are described in the middle of the Corralejas, added to the dehumanization in the way in which the bodies of the victims were

treated, dumped, or left unidentified or unclaimed. These testimonies also raise a social criticism of Corralejas, questioning their cultural and moral value due to the cruelty and inhumanity associated with this practice. Together, these central elements in the discourses highlight the need to reflect on the violence, suffering and transformation of this cultural tradition.

## Conclusions

The study of social networks in the context of historical and cultural events allows understanding the way in which people interpret and construct meanings in their environment. In this sense, Jodelet (1986) states that:

The notion of social representation places us at the point where the psychological and the social realms intersect. First of all, it concerns the way in which we, social subjects, apprehend the events of daily life, the characteristics of our environment, the information that circulates within it and the people in our immediate or distant environment (p. 473, own translation).

The study of SRs connects with the theory and the proposed method, since the symbolic construction of an event intersects with the collective notion of the event itself.

In Colombia—as in other countries—parties, festivals and fairs are promoted as a country brand and are part of the collective imagination (Betancourt, 2023, p. 182). In this sense, Fals (2002a) states that, from the beginning, in this type of festivals, people from all strata are present: “mixed without distinction, to do their foolish things; and even the rich women, wives and daughters of landowners, went out to the streets to set up tables to sell sweets and liquor” (p. 155).

The Corraleja festivity, likewise, brings together the population from different social strata, and combines religion, music, dance, local gastronomy, and commerce. In short, the idiosyncrasy of the Sincelejo people, their values, beliefs, and customs (Sánchez, 2007) serve as a collective catharsis, as described by Fals (2002b):

To alleviate social tensions, encourage popular recreation, and provide opportunities for individual expansion and distinction to the exploited and marginalized workers in front of the elitist culture of the savannas—apart from

horse racing, machete fencing, and similar sports—the famous bullfights today called “Corralejas” were developed (p. 96, own translation).

In this context, the dimension of the tragedy in the Corralejas of 1980 can be understood more broadly; as well as the construction of social networks that explain the contradictions of a cultural tradition that collides with modernity, and that revealed the political game that perpetuates colonial power (Hernández, 2013), and also justifies this type of celebrations on account of heritage preservation. Consequently, the collective town was marked in a before and after in its imagination with, according to the evidence collected, associated magical and symbolic elements, which raises questions about its origin and its relationship to the tragic event.

Magical thinking, closely linked to the sacred and the irrational in interpretation of Eliade (2022), reflects how tragedy and the world, or the "enchanted world," are perceived through a mythification of reality. This vision, socially shared, is an intrinsic part of the idiosyncrasy of the Colombian Caribbean coast and of Latin America in general.

In this line of thought, death, invariably associated with the sacred, represents a conclusion of the life cycle. The experience of collective death, or the collectivization of mourning, serves to attenuate individual pain. The solidarity of the people, manifested during the funeral ceremony, facilitated the process of collective mourning. At this event, families of the victims gathered, shared condolences and comfort. This showed that the pain and trauma transcended the personal realm, to become an experience shared by the entire community of Sincelejo, immersed in sadness due to the tragic outcome of its most important festival and the most notable Corraleja of the time.

Furthermore, these observations challenge traditional conceptions of the relationship between humans and animals, and invite rethinking the way in which humans understand each other, and how they relate to other species in cultural events and social contexts. The study of these SRs enriches the understanding of how individuals make physical and social reality intelligible, and how beliefs and imagination influence the interpretation of events that defy rational understanding. In this sense, a study of the sacred and the profane associated with the Corralejas tragedy of 1980 in Sincelejo is necessary.

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# Perceptions of Typhology in Colombia in the Context of Inclusive Education: Insights from Blind Individuals and Typhologists\*

[English version]

Percepciones de la tifología en Colombia en perspectiva de educación inclusiva: voces de personas ciegas y tifólogos

Percepções da tifologia na colômbia na perspectiva da educação inclusiva: vozes de pessoas cegas e tifólogos

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study explores the perceptions surrounding the work of typhlogists in Colombia. **Methodology:** The fieldwork was conducted with three population groups: professionals in typhlogy, professional blind adults, and blind youth from district educational institutions in the city of Bogota, Colombia. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary instrument for data collection. **Results:** It is evident that, although national regulations highlight the importance of typhlogy in inclusive education, there is no official profile established by the Ministry of National Education in which the field of action, characteristics and specific functions are established. In other words, there is no professionalization of the typhlogist's work. This means that any professional with a minimum of experience in relation to the educational process can accompany the visually impaired population. This could affect the quality of support provided to people with this type of disability in the country. **Conclusions:** It is necessary to recognize the importance of typhlogy as a profession that contributes to inclusive education, to the extent that it addresses all the dimensions of visual impairment.

**Keywords:** education; visual impairment; inclusion; typhlogy (obtained from UNESCO and MECS thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** se indaga en las percepciones que circulan alrededor de la labor del tiflólogo en Colombia. **Metodología:** el trabajo de campo se adelantó con tres grupos poblacionales: profesionales en tiflogía, adultos ciegos profesionales y jóvenes ciegos de instituciones educativas distritales de la ciudad de Bogotá, Colombia. Se hizo uso de la entrevista semiestructurada como principal instrumento de recolección de información. **Resultados:** se evidencia que, si bien desde la normatividad nacional se resalta la importancia de la tiflogía en la educación inclusiva, no hay un perfil oficial desde el Ministerio de Educación Nacional en el que se establezcan el campo de acción, características y funciones específicas. En otras palabras, no hay una profesionalización

de la labor del tiflólogo. Esto genera que cualquier profesional con unos mínimos de experiencia en relación con el proceso educativo realice acompañamiento a población con discapacidad visual. Lo que podría afectar la calidad del apoyo que se brinda a las personas con este tipo de discapacidad en el país. **Conclusiones:** es necesario reconocer la importancia de la tiflogía como una profesión que aporta a la educación inclusiva, en la medida en que aborda todas las dimensiones que comprende la discapacidad visual.

**Palabras clave:** educación; discapacidad visual; inclusión; tiflogía (obtenidos del tesoro UNESCO y MECS).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** investigar as percepções que circulam em torno do trabalho do tiflólogo na Colômbia. **Metodologia:** o trabalho de campo foi realizado com três grupos populacionais: profissionais em tiflogia, adultos cegos profissionais e jovens cegos de instituições educacionais distritais na cidade de Bogotá, Colômbia. Foi utilizada a entrevista semiestruturada como principal instrumento de coleta de informações.

**Resultados:** evidencia-se que, embora a importância da tiflogia na educação inclusiva seja destacada pela legislação nacional, não há um perfil oficial estabelecido pelo Ministério da Educação Nacional que defina o campo de atuação, características e funções específicas. Em outras palavras, não há uma profissionalização do trabalho do tiflólogo. Isso faz com que qualquer profissional com alguma experiência relacionada ao processo educacional preste apoio à população com deficiência visual. Isso pode afetar a qualidade do suporte oferecido às pessoas com esse tipo de deficiência no país.

**Conclusões:** é necessário reconhecer a importância da tiflogia como uma profissão que contribui para a educação inclusiva, na medida em que aborda todas as dimensões que envolvem a deficiência visual.

**Palavras-chave:** educação; deficiência visual; inclusão; tiflogia (obtidas do tesoro UNESCO e MECS).

## Introduction

The process of transforming special education towards inclusive and quality education reflects a paradigm shift in the pursuit of more just societies (Correa & Rúa, 2018; de la Rosa, 2021). Colombia has made significant progress at the regulatory level in the search for inclusion, equity and guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities in the educational sphere. This is evidenced by what is enacted in the Political Constitution of 1991, the Law 1346 of 2009, the Statutory Law 1618 of 2013, the Decree 1421 of 2017, the Ten-Year Education Plan 2016 -2026, the Guide for the implementation of Decree 1421 of 2017, the Guidelines for reporting children and adolescents with disabilities in the Integrated Enrollment System (SIMAT), Circular 020 of 2022, Policy Guidelines for inclusion and equity in education: Education for all people without exception 2022, among others.

In this context, the recent Resolution 1239 of 2022, issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, includes in the category of visual impairment both blind people and those with low vision. The latter includes those who, despite wearing glasses, contact lenses or having undergone surgery, have difficulty perceiving light, shape, size or color of objects. It also highlights the importance of providing support to promote independence and autonomy, such as orientation canes, glasses or magnifying glasses, texts in Braille, macrotype (enlarged text), screen reader programs, magnifying programs, or auditory information, among others (MEN, MSPS & the Saldarriaga Foundation, 2021).

Despite legislative advances in Colombia, there are still challenges that require attention to ensure inclusive and quality education for all students in the country (Aristizábal, 2019; Guerrero & Rojas, 2023). These challenges are evident in the experiences of blind students, who face barriers that restrict their participation and learning in the educational environment. These include insufficient teaching on the use of Braille and the abacus, and the lack of implementation of techniques that promote orientation, mobility and socialization in school spaces and daily activities (Ruiz & Zamora, 2021); as well as the shortage of specialized personnel to meet the educational needs of blind children and young people in regular educational offerings (Castro, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) has created temporary jobs for pedagogical support teachers, with the objective of reinforcing accompaniment in educational establishments and to classroom teachers (MEN, 2015; MEN, 2017). These professionals are affiliated with the schools of certified territorial entities, and among their responsibilities are the design and implementation of curricular flexibilities, advising on inclusive

pedagogical strategies, and collaborating with the educational team to ensure educational support for students with disabilities, including visual impairment. This is aimed at contributing to the construction of an accessible and equitable educational environment that promotes the full participation of all students in the school setting (MEN, 2015; MEN, 2017).

Among these professionals is the typhlogist, a specialist who focuses on developing didactics that allow for the application of typhological areas in teaching-learning processes, determining reasonable adjustments, and promoting the participation of blind and visually impaired students in the educational process within the framework of inclusion (Ruiz & Zamora, 2021). In fact, the National Institute for the Blind (INCI, Spanish acronym for *Instituto Nacional Para Ciegos*), the entity responsible for ensuring the rights of Colombians with visual disabilities, asserts that to move towards a more inclusive education, it is necessary to involve professionals who understand how to support blind and visually impaired students in their academic training processes, in accordance with the provisions of Decree 1421 of 2017 (INCI, 2018).

However, no professional typhlogists have been trained in Colombia since the mid-1990s. In fact, the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN) was the only institution of higher education in Colombia that offered and trained graduates in education with this emphasis, who received the title as: Bachelor's in Special Education with an Emphasis in Typhology. As a result of this educational trajectory, 82 experts in visual impairment, 32 experts in Typhology, accredited as intermediate professional technicians, and 67 graduates in Special Education with an emphasis in Typhology graduated (Cabrera, 1993). Consequently, there is currently a significant shortage of these professionals in the country (INCI, 2019). In addition, higher education institutions do not have and have not offered a formal postgraduate education program in Typhology, which hinders the visibility, research and updating of this profession in Colombia (Castro, 2022).

Within the framework of a global movement towards inclusion, distancing itself from the population-based approaches that gave rise to Special Education with an Emphasis on Typology, the aim is to move towards a broader perspective of diversity (Ministry of National Education et al., 2021). This article explores the perceptions of people with visual disabilities and typhlogists on typhology in Colombia, valuing the authenticity of their experiences and understanding that their voices allow for the identification of successes and necessary adjustments in response to the paradigm shifts that redefine educational support for people with disabilities.

## Methodology

This study has an interpretative approach, since it seeks to understand the meaning of typhology in Colombia, through the emerging reality and the voices of those involved in this field. Three key profiles were considered for the selection of participants in order to capture a broad representation of perceptions of typhology in Colombia. Typhologists with recognized experience were convened, as well as blind adults and youth who had previously utilized typhology services; all of them residing in Bogotá.

Four professionals with over ten years of experience in typhology in the educational field participated. The selected typhologists hold teaching roles in higher education institutions, and work as temporary pedagogical support teachers in district schools in the city of Bogotá. This group was chosen to gain insight into the support, training, and teaching processes directed towards blind individuals within the educational setting.

The second profile included three blind adults, over 30 years old, with postgraduate education and professional development in various areas. This group was chosen to explore and understand the scope of typhology from the life experience of the participants, and to analyze the generational conceptions of this discipline.

The third group consisted of three blind youth aged between 15 and 20, in the process of completing their high school studies in public educational institutions. This inclusion provided an opportunity to closely analyze the daily experiences of blind students in the current context of inclusive education in Colombia.

The semi-structured interview technique was used, which involves asking a set of open-ended questions to the interviewees. According to Tejero (2021), this allows the collection of sufficient data to understand the area of interest and saturate the information. This offers researchers multiple points of view from participants, as well as the flexibility to change the order of questions, add new ones, ask for clarification, or go deeper into a specific topic, facilitating a fluid, personalized and authentic conversation.

The procedure involved creating an interview guide aligned with the research objective, structured into previously established categories that included sociodemographic information, related regulations, training opportunities, and the significance of typhology in Colombia. The ten interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached, and the established topics were covered. During the data collection process, informed consent was obtained from the participants,

and ethical considerations proposed for research involving human subjects were followed, establishing a risk level lower than the minimum (Resolution 8430 of 1993).

Following the dialogue, a process of orthographic transcription of the audio formats into text documents in Word was carried out to facilitate the collection of the provided responses, the coding, and the content analysis. This technique made it possible to identify recurring patterns expressed by the interviewees during the development of the questions, examining the different factors that have an impact on the research topic. This was done with the assistance of specialized data analysis software, ATLAS. IT, which allows to extract, categorize, and relate data segments from various documents (Puig et al., 2014).

## Results

This section presents the results classified according to the pre-established categories and those that emerged during the dialogue with the participants.

### Political Factors

This category refers to elements related to the normative context that influences perceptions of typhology in Colombia. In this regard, exploration was conducted on the interpretation of policies, laws, regulations, and norms directly related to inclusive education and the rights of people with visual disabilities.

The educational support for people with disabilities in Colombia has undergone significant changes in the models of care, their scope, and field of action (MEN, 2017). According to a blind adult, these transformations are due to:

[...] the social struggles of historically excluded sectors, which were previously in segregated education, as they are now demanding spaces where everyone, including, of course, the population with disabilities, can be included. So, it is basically the perspective of inclusion or inclusive education, and that is that everyone learns in the same spaces. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023).

Therefore, it is essential to continue advancing towards inclusive education to maintain consistency with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this context, speech typhlogist and other support professionals are immersed in fundamental processes aimed at the personal development of individuals with visual impairment, within the framework of education for all. This commitment transcends mere professional responsibility, and is based on essential values such as cooperation, respect, and recognition of the characteristics of this group (Verdugo et al., 2020).

In this regard, a young blind man interviewed mentions that

[...] there are many barriers because learning is very different from that of a person who can see; what facilitator there can be or what I have found out mainly is that, well, typhlogists provide audios, videos, or assign us material to be able to learn a little more or approach the similarity of the activity being carried out. (Personal communication, May 30, 2023, own translation).

This perspective of inclusion benefits the visually impaired population by allowing them to share experiences and knowledge with people without disabilities, creating an enriching space for all. It guarantees an education in which dialogues from different knowledge are promoted; as well as the construction of inclusive environments, where mutual understanding is fostered and inclusive education is put into practice. This to overcome barriers and promote meaningful learning that drives better interactions and self-determination, as pointed out by the MEN (2017).

Although regulations on inclusive education can be interpreted as favorable, they can also be understood as barriers. A typhlogist mentioned:

[...] the principal of the school where I am, he is very legalistic, and he says that the school opened for everyone. We are not going to exclusively receive children with visual disabilities. "We are going to receive all the children who arrive." So there, children with cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, autism, arrive, and at that moment, within the school's profile, we are more pedagogical support teachers than typhlogists. (Personal communication, May 20, 2023, own translation).

This is highlighted in national regulations, such as Decree 1421 of 2017 and Circular 020 of 2022, oriented towards inclusion and equity in education, which contribute to the care of students with disabilities and the organization of the education system. However, the involvement of the typhlogist in a pedagogical support teacher role can lead to a lack of recognition as a profession

and ambiguity about the action they carry out. Consistent with Guerrero and Rojas (2023), this affects the quality of supports and accommodations for students with visual impairments.

## Meaning of Typhology in Colombia

This category refers to the understanding and appreciation that participants attribute to typhology based on their own conceptions and experiences.

The meaning of typhology in Colombia has undergone significant changes over time. Since, in line with the models of the time, the education of people with visual disabilities was carried out in a segregated manner in specialized institutions or they were integrated into regular classrooms. This is expressed by two blind adults interviewed:

I was the only blind person in the school. So no, they didn't have tools, and well, they suggest that I enter a school that already implements these integration processes. I remember that at that time it was called, school integration or something like that. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

Similarly, the other participant states that

I studied in a school where I was the only blind student, at a time when the law didn't even exist, imagine, let's think about Law 115 which is from '94, I entered school in '88 when the law came out, I had already been in school for 6 years, so I was educated in illegality [...] They issued that law, which doesn't even talk about inclusion, it talks about integration. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

However, with the evolution of educational policies and approaches toward inclusion, the meaning of typhology has evolved. It is now recognized that this is not limited to specific training in aspects related to visual impairment, but also encompasses the comprehensive training of educators and professionals working in the field of inclusive education.

A typhlogist interviewed defines a «typhlogist» as

[a person who broadly recognizes the capabilities of blind and low vision people, who recognizes them as peers, that is, as equals, who recognizes the potential of



blind and low vision people and who is willing to work with them and for them. A person who is free from prejudices regarding blindness. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

In this sense, etymologically the term "TIFLO" comes from Greek mythology. "TIFLOS" was the name of a Greek island where the blind were exiled. Today, "TIFLO" is used to refer to people who are visually impaired in some way. Thus, "typhology" is the science that studies the inclusion in education of people with visual impairment (Ruibal, 2018).

Regarding the functions of the typhologist, three interviewees expressed that these encompass "[...] teaching typhological areas such as the use of the abacus, the cane, and obviously the braille writing system when applicable, skills for daily living, orientation and mobility, and typhotechnological tools" (personal communication, May 22, 2023). Similarly, they must «[...] adapt the guides to the student, if he/she requires it, also, they must provide support in some classes if the student requires it» (personal communication, May 30, 2023, own translation), and work on

The perspective of inclusion in inclusive education is that everyone learns in the same spaces with the adjustments that need to be made and with the rhythms that need to be respected for each of the students. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

According to Lizarazo et al. (2023) states that typhology is divided into five typhological areas: Braille system, closed abacus, orientation and mobility, typhotechnologies and daily living skills, and rehabilitation or comprehensive habilitation.

These could be functions that are considered within the minimum parameters for the inclusion of support staff with roles in typhology, for the care of blind and visually impaired students. Currently, the required profile, according to INCI (2019), is: licensed professionals in Special Education - Typhology, whose training indicates in-depth studies in visual impairment; teachers who can demonstrate training in typhological areas; or non-licensed professionals with two (2) years of experience in direct care for the visually impaired population in the educational system.

Similarly, the practice of this professional is not limited only to the educational field, as explained by a typhologist:

[...] we can find typhologists in rehabilitation, we can find typhologists in labor inclusion, even typhologists in health processes other than rehabilitation. That

is fine because the focus of typhology is knowledge about blindness, blindness as a category. In that sense, one can be a typhologist with training in technology, a special educator, a disciplinary educator in any discipline, a therapist, of course, because he has the knowledge, his performance will be different in each setting. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

When we think we have progressed in policies and affirmative actions that promote inclusive spaces, scenarios arise that probably no one thought of. As mentioned by a blind adult,

[...] It is necessary, for example, to consider if in the adaptation of job positions it is necessary to think about support in higher education, it is necessary to think, for example, in the field of health there is pharmaceutical information, there is, for example, someone, a woman was complaining; a blind woman said, well, I went to do my course, what's it called, the psychoprophylactic course, to have my baby, and everything was on video, I didn't understand anything. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

This may be something new, but it is necessary and important for the disabled population, who have every right to appreciate reality from their access possibilities.

It is interpreted that the meaning of typhology in Colombia, from the perspective of blind individuals and typhlogists, has undergone a process of transformation; especially with the paradigm shift from special education to inclusive education and the origin of typhology. The understanding that the interviewees attribute to the role of the typhologist highlights the importance of recognizing that the central core of typhology lies in knowledge about blindness. Regarding this, a blind young person refers that.

[...] the function of a typhologist is to provide a kind of accompaniment, let's say not all the time but in things that the student or the person who requires it, that support, whether it is well, it is in part difficult for me, so I say that rather than a permanent support, it is like where you can seek help in things that are difficult for you. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023).

This approach allows a typhologist to play his role in a variety of settings, and his training should enable him to perform in a variety of roles; in areas such as rehabilitation, occupational inclusion, and health, and adapting his

performance to each specific context. It highlights the flexibility and versatility of the typhlogist beyond traditional boundaries, even in unexpected scenarios.

### **Training Opportunities**

This category refers to the different options available to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work as a typhlogist in the country. As well as to train professionals interested in working with people with visual disabilities and provide them with the necessary resources and tools for their comprehensive development.

Some interviewees mention that professional training opportunities in Colombian higher education institutions represent a significant barrier for typhlogists. In this regard, a typhlogist mentions that

[...] there are seminars that talk about and give space to Typhloeducation, but no, in none of those include training in Typhlogy, like, a subject within the multiple subjects that are seen, for example, at Pedagogical University, Typhlogy in education is mandatory, but there are others that become elective, so no, there is no training. (Personal communication, May 20, 2023, own translation).

In this sense, while one of the important changes was the adoption of uniform norms on equal opportunities for people with disabilities by the State, typhlogy is not addressed as specific training. Such is the case of the Special Education program at the National Pedagogical University which, influenced by the promulgation of the Political Constitution of Colombia and in response to these demands, restructured its curriculum in 1994 to favor more inclusive educational contexts, but focusing on the comprehensive training of special educators (Lancheros, 1993).

Currently, Colombia only has five active bachelor's programs in Special Education in higher education institutions; at the National Pedagogical University, University of Atlántico, University of Antioquia, University los Libertadores, and the Ibero-American University Corporation, which offer elective subjects in typhlogical areas and teaching sessions on braille and abacus (Castro, 2022). However, the mentioned academic programs offer training in visual impairment, but not in depth, and the teaching of typhlogical areas is elective. This results in special education graduates not having the necessary tools to make the relevant adjustments and provide support to the mentioned population (Castro, 2022).

In coherence, the reflection of another typhlogist is highlighted, who mentions that

[...] the Special Education degrees have in their undergraduate program some subjects that can be, in the case of Pedagogy, part of the undergraduate curriculum and have some electives, for example, in Orientation and Mobility, in Stenography and in that kind of things, but evidently in 16 weeks they do not give you enough time to train special education students as typhlogists, so it continues to be a topic that needs to be further strengthened and for which solutions need to be sought at all levels. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

This perspective emphasizes the need to continue seeking strategies and solutions at different levels to strengthen typhology training within bachelor's programs in Special Education, and thus ensure a more comprehensive preparation for future typhlogists.

Regarding other training opportunities, the program in Typhology for Inclusion stands out, offered by the Ministry of Education (MEN) and the Center for Rehabilitation of Blind Adults (CRAC), aimed at licensed educators, therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists. highlighting the relevance of this initiative, a typhlogist reports: "To date, 28 professionals have graduated in a first cohort, 33 professionals in a second cohort, and 22 professionals are expected to graduate in the third cohort that started in January of the current year" (personal communication, May 17, 2023). These numbers are evidence of the impact and positive response of the participants to the training proposal. However, despite these achievements, the Ministry of Education (MEN) does not recognize it as a postgraduate study, but rather as a supplementary training course. Considering this situation, it is evident that the training of typhlogists has become blurred and minimized in formal education contexts.

The above, within the framework of inclusive education and in accordance with Ruiz and Zamora (2021), poses new challenges with respect to the training of typhlogists from educational models that recognize the particularities of blind and low vision students in Colombia. This includes the transformation of the policies, practices, and cultures of educational contexts.

## Attitudinal Factors

This category focuses on exploring how attitudes influence the dynamics of typhology, and how they can affect or favor the full participation in the educational setting of people with visual impairment.

People with disabilities face a variety of obstacles every day that prevent them from exercising their rights. As expressed by a typhologist:

[...] support teachers or discipline teachers become a barrier if we have negative imaginaries of blind and low vision people [...] many speech therapists are more barriers than facilitators. [...] Because the typhologist tells the chemistry teacher 'Why does a blind person need chemistry?' [...] when no one denies other students the possibility of studying chemistry or playing soccer. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

These attitudinal barriers have been related to the exercise of authority by the typhologist, and to the asymmetry of roles that can transcend the educational practice and influence the ways of understanding and relating to the other. In this sense, a blind young man mentions that "[...] the same teacher in the classroom generates barriers out of fear", and a blind adult states that:

[...] there is a power relationship that is established between the typhologist, the blind student and the classroom teacher based on the discourse of inclusive education, which goes beyond the pedagogical. When these domains appear about students with disabilities something must be done. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

These approaches may reflect Foucault's (1983) statement that in the educational context, discipline represents the authority that one individual gives to another to be trained and guided. This absolute power can oppress and rule, but it also generates resistance and development of capacities to seek freedom. The more oppressive the power, the greater the need to develop skills to cope with it (Hilario, 2015).

Similarly, there is mention of a distorted understanding of disability, where it is mistakenly seen as a homogeneous condition, failing to acknowledge the diversity of abilities, talents, and interests among individuals in various situations. For example, a blind person, referring to their educational process, mentions that

[...] everything was mediated by a protocol [...]. The paradox here is that, in those protocols, they somehow blocked the spontaneity between teachers, students, and blind individuals; everyday life was blocked by formality, by routes, and by procedures. (Personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation).

The same person refers that this transcends educational spaces and ends up affecting the independence of people with disabilities; she gives as an example that it is common that in the street people approach without asking and invade the body and space of blind people because they believe they are dependent. According to the Mayor's Office of Bogotá and the Saldarriaga Concha Foundation (2022), these barriers "[...] permeate all environments where PWDs are seen as dependent, 'the eternal child'" (p. 26, own translation). They do not self-determine, which restricts inclusion processes and the guarantee of rights.

The above highlights the importance of the enactment of Law 1996 of 2019, through which a regime for the exercise of legal capacity of adults with disabilities is established. This guarantees respect for human dignity and non-discrimination, in line with important international regulations regarding the rights of this population (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá & Fundación Saldarriaga Concha, 2022).

## Factors of Access to Information

This category includes aspects related to obtaining information effectively, considering how communication and information technologies can influence their participation in the educational context.

Typhlogists who have extensive knowledge of technologies can be of great support for teachers and people with visual impairments. This includes knowledge of cane use, screen readers, screen magnification software, e-book reading systems, braille devices and object recognition applications, among others. In this regard, a typhologist mentions:

[...] for example, in the case with my student and a lot of information, because they send text through WhatsApp and she receives it and saves it, because thanks to the cell phone, not the one we can have, because she uses those means. There are also many teachers who, with the work that has been done, know that they can send PDF documents that can be read both on their cell phones and computers, and this has been the way to have access to many documents. Well, it would be a little difficult to have them all in Braille or all printed, because of the amount of

information, so technology, when used well, is a facilitator in inclusive education. (Personal communication, May 20, 2023, own translation).

This, according to Martínez et al. (2022)

[...] has significantly benefited all individuals, especially people with disabilities, to whom it has given greater independence, since it has facilitated access to information and equal conditions. It has also allowed the acquisition of knowledge and has helped them to have a satisfactory academic and work performance (p. 30, own translation).

In Colombia, since 2017 the National Government, through the ConVerTic project, acquired the Country License. This is a software that allows visually impaired people to use computers through screen readers free of charge.

Such is the case of Andrés Díaz, a lawyer and beneficiary of ConVerTIC, who emphasizes that the most interesting aspect of the project is "the possibility of being independent at work and having access to information". He was even able to become independent and have his own firm without the need to be employed by a traditional company. (MinTIC, 2023, own translation).

### **Lack of Awareness Regarding the Profession**

This category emerges from the perceptions of the interviewees and refers to the lack of widespread knowledge and recognition of typhology in the country.

In this regard, a blind adult says "Well, there is a problem, and that is that as the speech therapist does not exist specifically in the regulations, there is special education, let's say, as a discipline it is offered as training in some universities in the country" (personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation). Accordingly, it is believed that only the special educator is the one who meets the requirements and knowledge necessary to provide care and follow up on the processes carried out with the visually impaired population. However, as previously identified, in the academic offer of this degree at the national level, it is evident that, in spite of handling a knowledge base, either because they accessed this information in the framework of a subject, elective or training course, the curriculum of this degree is not designed to respond to the specific needs of the population. Hence, it is perceived that the importance of typhology has been minimized and this function has been delegated to those who believe they have knowledge about this science.

Another blind adult also refers in this regard:

Since 1994, profiles in typhology students have graduated in Colombia, and even the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional suggested Typhology as an emphasis of Special Education. That's why in Colombia we cannot speak of professionals in Typhology, but rather, graduates in Special Education with an Emphasis in Typhology, in response to the recognition of providing exclusive knowledge of the skills that are managed with the blind and visually impaired population. Since we could say that it is not the same to teach the use of software to a blind person than to a non-blind person; and this requires almost specific and imperceptible knowledge in the light of educational teaching in general. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

Something that contributes to this lack of knowledge is that there is no official document that defines the profile and functions of the typhologist in Colombia. However, a typhologist interviewed, states that

[...] the five bachelor's degrees in special education and the organization of people with visual disabilities in our country have been working hard and decisively towards organizing the profile of typhologists [...]. The profile was approved, it should have been issued at the end of the previous administration as a circular from the Ministry of National Education, but for some unknown reason to us, it was not published. But at this moment, the Ministry has already committed to releasing the profile. (Personal communication, May 17, 2023, own translation).

As a result, typhology has lost relevance in academic scenarios, since the profile, job description, competencies and basic knowledge required are unknown.

This response is echoed by a blind adult who mentions "I know that the Ministry of Education, together with some social organizations and Fecode, were defining what the role and functions of support teachers were going to be" (personal communication, May 15, 2023, own translation). For now, there are only two current documents: The first one is made by INCI (2019), where the profile of support staff with functions in typhology are established; and another one that is consigned in Wikitiflos, "*Perfil del tiflólogo*" (Ruiz & Zamora, 2021). Despite this, they are not established by Ministry of Education [MEN] guidelines.



## Conclusions

Although national regulations promote inclusion and equity in education, the lack of recognition of typhology as a profession in Colombia, together with the limited training options, the absence of an official profile and clear definition of functions represent a major challenge. There is a clear need to promote greater visibility and institutional recognition for typhology, promoting a more comprehensive and mandatory education, supported by clear educational policies aimed at recognizing and valuing diversity, while recognizing the particularities of each person.

As for possible alternatives, it could be considered in the training of teachers, or other professionals who work in the educational scenario, a deepening in the care of people with visual impairment, allowing a more comprehensive care and adapted to the particularities of each student. This could contribute to overcome the lack of recognition of typhology as an independent discipline and guarantee a more effective attention to the diversity of the visually impaired population in the Colombian educational context.

The meaning of typhology in Colombia has evolved over time from a segregated approach to an inclusive one. The importance of inclusive education and equal opportunities for the visually impaired is recognized, which has led to a change in the conception of typhology. This approach seeks to generate educational contexts that promote joint learning and integral development, breaking down barriers and overcoming discrimination in the field of education.

However, attitudinal factors can restrict the full participation of people with visual impairments. It is evident that negative attitudes and power relations on the part of typhologists and teachers can hinder inclusion. In addition, it is identified that a distorted understanding of disability can limit the spontaneity and independence of blind people. It is necessary to address these barriers mentioned from the voices of those involved, starting with the promotion of an inclusive culture that advocates for adequate training to typhologists, teachers and society in general. With respect to access to information, it should be noted that tiftotechnology is a key facilitator, providing the technological tools that make it possible.

Consequently, it is necessary to implement measures at the normative and scientific-academic levels to strengthen the field of typhology and promote its recognition in the country. Within the normative framework, it is necessary

to formulate specific educational policies that define the professional profile of the speech therapist, so that only certified professionals in the field can provide support. On the other hand, scientific-academic actions are aimed at designing new research that contributes to the consolidation of typhology as a science that contributes to inclusive education, since it encompasses all the vital and functional dimensions covered by visual impairment. In this way, the actions described at both levels are necessary to eliminate barriers that hinder quality education based on the principles of equity, justice, and participation for all.

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# Conceptions of Childhood in the Initial Training of Teachers: A Phenomenological Research Conducted in the Teacher Training Schools of the Department of Caldas, Colombia\*

[English version]

Concepciones de infancia en la formación inicial de maestros. Una investigación fenomenológica realizada en las Escuelas Normales Superiores del departamento de Caldas, Colombia

Concepções de infância na formação inicial de professores: uma pesquisa fenomenológica realizada nas Escolas Normais Superiores do departamento de Caldas, Colômbia

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This article presents findings from broader research aimed at exploring the significance of complementary training programs at the Teacher Training Schools of the Department of Caldas in shaping the relationship between conceptions of childhood and pedagogy in teacher training. **Methodology:**

\* Research carried out by the author as a doctoral thesis entitled «*Concepciones de infancia y pedagogía de los maestros de las Escuelas Normales Superiores de Caldas*». Affiliated with the Research Group Teachers and Contexts at the Universidad de Caldas. Financing: Own financing. Declaration of interests: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest. Data availability: The research data are in the repository of the Universidad de Caldas: <https://repositorio.ucaldas.edu.co/handle/ucaldas/19707>

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A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, focus groups, and associative letters to investigate three groups of teachers from each of the four Teacher Training Schools sampled in Caldas. **Results:** The research findings elucidate the various conceptions of childhood that emerged from the experiences of teachers, shedding light on their significance within the context of teacher training programs. They are synthesized in categories. These categories encompass reduction to developmental stages, the invisibility of cultural change in modern childhood, and conceptions of contemporary childhoods. **Conclusions:** The findings underscore the significance of teachers' experiences in shaping their conceptions, rooted in their own childhoods. Furthermore, the research highlights the theoretical gaps in teacher training regarding the cultural shifts in contemporary childhoods and emphasizes their critical role in shaping pedagogical practices within teacher training institutions.

**Keywords:** conceptions of childhood; cognition; pedagogy; teacher training (obtained from the Eric thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** este artículo es resultado de una investigación más amplia, cuyo objetivo fue develar el sentido que dan los maestros de los programas de formación complementaria de las Escuelas Normales Superiores del Departamento de Caldas a la relación entre las concepciones de infancia y pedagogía en la formación de maestros. **Metodología:** con una metodología fenomenológica hermenéutica, en la que se indagó con el uso de entrevistas en profundidad, grupos de enfoque y cartas asociativas en tres grupos de maestros para cada normal considerada dentro de la muestra de cuatro de Caldas. **Resultados:** los resultados de la investigación muestran las concepciones de infancia que emergen, y el sentido que tienen desde la experiencia de los maestros. Estas están sintetizadas en categorías vinculadas con la reducción a la etapa del desarrollo, la infancia moderna que invisibiliza el cambio cultural, y las concepciones de infancias contemporáneas. **Conclusiones:** se concluye el sentido de las experiencias vinculadas a la construcción de concepciones determinadas en la cognición de los maestros, construidas desde la propia niñez; así como las ausencias teóricas en la formación del profesorado sobre el cambio cultural de las infancias contemporáneas y su importancia en la configuración de las prácticas pedagógicas en las instituciones formadoras de maestros.

**Palabras clave:** concepciones de infancia; cognición; pedagogía; formación de maestros (obtenidas del tesoro Eric).



## Resumo

**Objetivo:** este artigo é resultado de uma pesquisa mais ampla, cujo objetivo foi revelar o sentido atribuído pelos professores dos programas de formação complementar das Escolas Normais Superiores do Departamento de Caldas à relação entre as concepções de infância e pedagogia na formação de professores. **Metodologia:** com uma metodologia fenomenológica hermenêutica, que investigou por meio de entrevistas em profundidade, grupos focais e cartas associativas em três grupos de professores para cada escola normal considerada dentro da amostra de quatro em Caldas. **Resultados:** os resultados da pesquisa mostram as concepções de infância que emergem e o significado que têm a partir da experiência dos professores. Estas estão sintetizadas em categorias vinculadas com a redução à etapa do desenvolvimento, a infância moderna que invisibiliza a mudança cultural e as concepções de infâncias contemporâneas. **Conclusões:** conclui-se o significado das experiências vinculadas à construção de concepções específicas na cognição dos professores, construídas desde a própria infância; assim como as ausências teóricas na formação do corpo docente sobre a mudança cultural das infâncias contemporâneas e sua importância na configuração das práticas pedagógicas nas instituições formadoras de professores.

**Palavras-chave:** concepções de infância; cognição; pedagogia; formação de professores (obtidas do tesauro ERIC).

## Introduction

This article presents findings from doctoral research, focusing on the insights derived from meetings with three groups of teachers in training at the Teacher Training Schools (TTS). It specifically delves into the results pertaining to the first category that emerged from the research. The research centered on a fundamental issue within Teacher Training education concerning conceptions of childhood. These conceptions, often limited to the biological realm, overlook the socio-historical and philosophical dimensions that underpin contemporary childhood studies and the conceptualization of childhood. It is noteworthy to recognize the essential role of these conceptions in Teacher Training education, as they are inherent to its nature (Decree 1236, 2020) and pivotal for its ongoing development (de Guzmán, 1986).

The research problem also stems from a concern observed across various teacher training scenarios, where the academic study and theorization of childhood as a conceptual framework are often marginalized (García & Osorio, 2020; García, 2019), largely attributed to the delayed introduction of Piagetian theories in the country (Jiménez, 2011).

Conceptions are ideas that animate teachers' pedagogical practices. These concepts are shaped by experience and, therefore, are investigated through phenomenology. This approach opens the possibility of uncovering the essential structures of language that endow that experience with meaning. Through this approach, the researcher can identify the underlying semantic structures and construct detailed analyses that reveal a profound understanding of childhood conceptions.

Historical evidence suggests that the emergence of the concept of childhood triggered the development of several key institutions: Schools, pedagogical practices reflecting the focus on children's learning, and teacher training programs (Narodowski, 1999; Runge, 2017; Valencia, 2006; Álvarez-Uria & Varela, 1991). These categories have been mutually influenced ever since.

Currently, contemporary childhoods are separated from the ages of life and the biological view of development in stages. Childhood conceptions are intricately intertwined with the human condition, drawing from socio-historical and philosophical perspectives, and are crucially linked to advancements in the welfare state of nations. Within Caldas's normality-focused institutions, childhood is often narrowly construed as a mere stage of development. While clearly influenced by Piagetian studies, this focus on childhood as solely a developmental stage is not necessarily outdated or unimportant. However, it can limit our understanding of

childhood by conflating distinct concepts such as childhood, early childhood, and Early Childhood Development (ECD) within a single framework.

Teachers' pedagogical practices reflect their underlying conceptions of childhood, shaped by their cognitive processing of experience. These conceptions, in turn, determine how teachers interact with children in the learning environment. Likewise, the work, conversation, and research scenarios of teachers in the Teacher Training Schools are influenced by cognition.

## Methodology

### **The Path of Phenomenology to Find an Answer to the Problem of Childhood Conceptions**

This qualitative study utilizes a mixed design approach, employing hermeneutic phenomenology (Ricoeur, 2002; Greimas, 1979; Trejo, 2012) alongside historiographic research techniques (Valencia, 2006). The research draws on both the conformational path approach (Valencia, 2006) and social representations theory (Abric, 2001). Three types of analysis were conducted: (1) Doxographic and etiological analysis of documentary sources (Valencia et al., 2002; García, 2006), (2) analysis of social practices and representations using Abric's (2001) free association method, and (3) structural discourse and semantic analysis inspired by Greimas (1979).

This study focused on the Teacher Training Schools of the Caldas department. Within each school, three groups of teachers formed the unit of analysis: 1) PFC Teachers (PFC stands for "*Planes de Fomento a la Calidad*," which translates to "Quality Enhancement Plans"), 2) PFC Students, and 3) Practice Teachers. A purposive sampling strategy (Hernández et al., 2006) was used, guided by criteria of feasibility, participant availability, and informed consent. The instruments used were associative letters, in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The method most closely aligned with the object of study and the research question is hermeneutic phenomenology, as it directly engages with the subjective experience of individuals through the analysis of phenomena such as the conception of childhood and pedagogy. It assigns value, significance, and meaning to the essence of the narrative, which is objectified, analyzed, and then synthesized by the researcher. Similarly, historical research techniques were utilized to analyze documentary information, along with social representation techniques to collect information directly from the living sources, namely the teachers.

The primary interest of the researcher was to uncover the meanings attributed by the interviewed teachers to childhood in relation to pedagogy and teacher training. These meanings emerge explicitly in the narration of the experience, which is personal and non-transferable. They are understandable through the possibility provided by phenomenology to unveil them by engaging in *epoche*, utilizing the paths of transcendental reduction of that experience, and generating interpretations until uncovering the structure of the conception and its relationship with the world evident to the researcher. At the same time, the subject's experience represents the lifeworld that is interconnected with that of others, as individuals make associations based on their relationships and interactions with each other. To elucidate and understand the association of conceptions, the associative letters of Abric (2001) were used as a tool to situate and explore the connections between experience and the formation of conceptions. Subsequently, further exploration was conducted through interviews and focus group discussions. Figure 1 depicts the methodological design, illustrating successive stages of data collection, analysis, and treatment of the information gathered in the TTS.

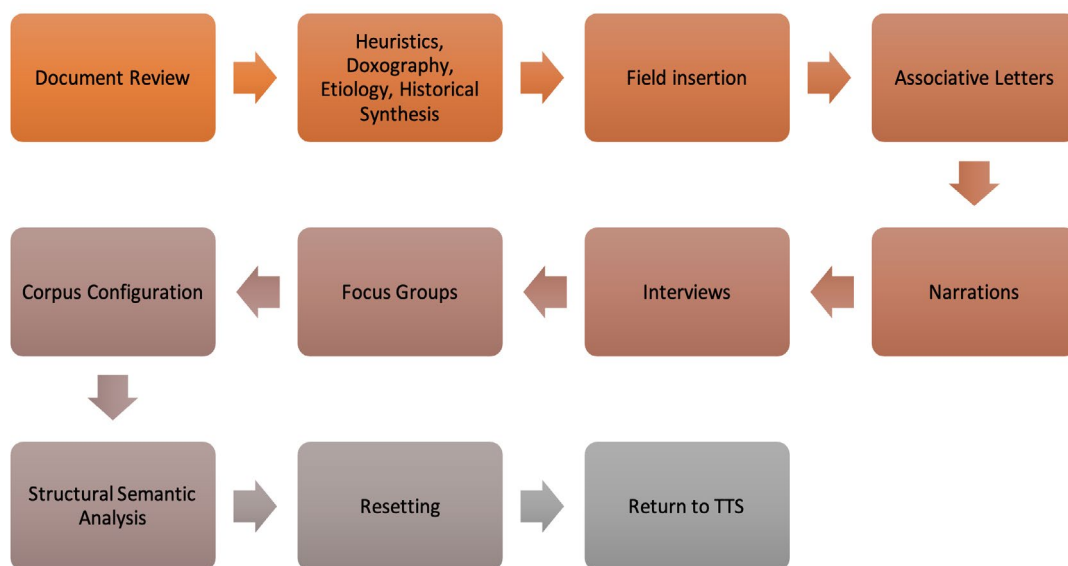


Figure 1. Methodological Design

## Results

### **The Experience of Teachers as an Answer to the Question About the Conceptions of Childhood**

Teachers, through reflection on their own experiences, reconstruct their understanding of childhood and how it shapes their current conceptions. That is to say, the anecdotes, sought to uncover the origins of these conceptions, yield valuable insights when teachers share their own lived experiences, as illustrated below:

Conceptions are intricate, shaped by various moments of personal history that draw from different dimensions in their formation. For authors like Abelleira and Abelleira (2019), teachers construct their conceptions based on the teachings of certain reference authors encountered during their Teacher Training education, undergraduate studies, or postgraduate education, depending on their level of training. They also shape their conceptions through interactions with other educators and encounters with elements of language that have evolved into reflections, even if their origins are not clearly defined. For instance, exposure to media messages that convey ideas about children, childhood, or the concept of a child can influence their perspectives.

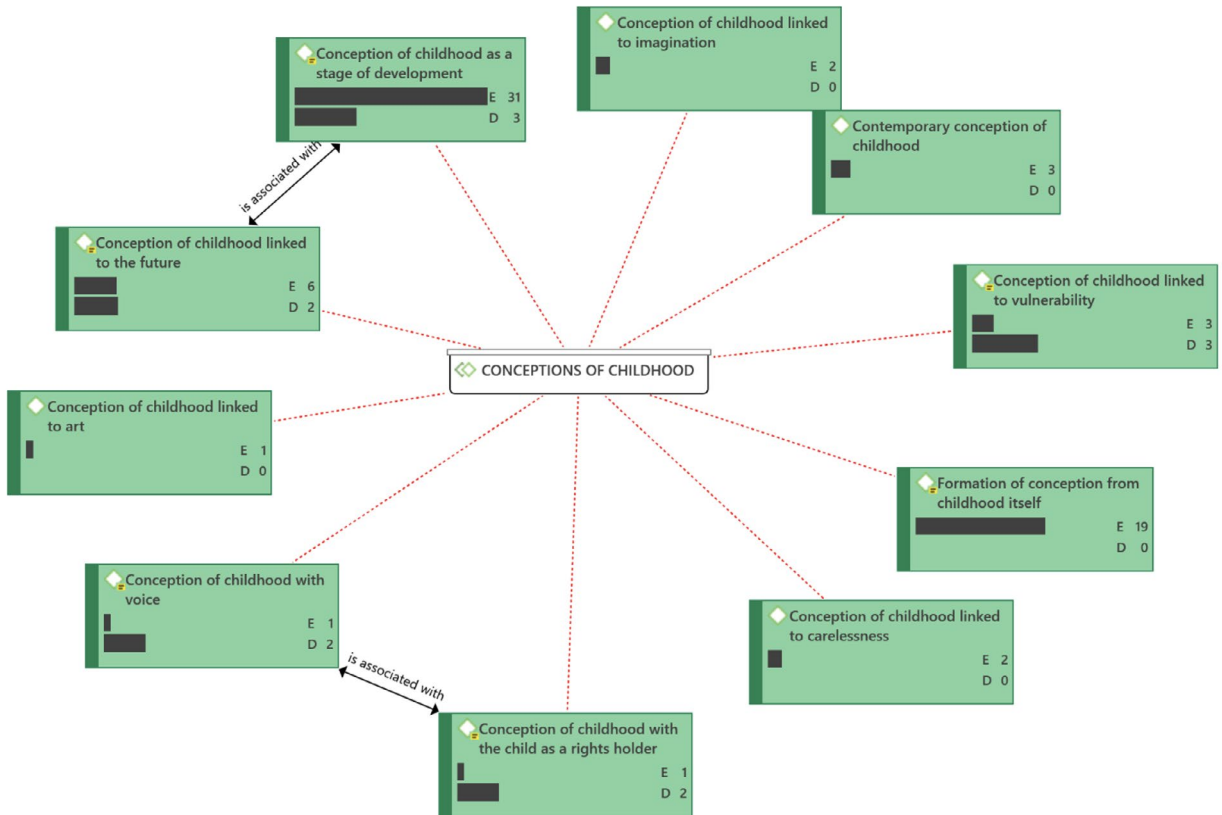
The ways of constructing the conception of childhood are multiple and refer to a diffuse panorama as far as academia is concerned. Some, from a scientific paradigm of science didactics, consider the conceptions in direct relation to the academic knowledge that the teacher should exhibit. However, some, more aligned with a pedagogical approach rooted in experiential learning, argue that these ideas shape teachers' thinking and actions (Zimmerman, 2004; Guzmán & Guevara, 2010; Zimmerman & Trabazo, 2015; García & Osorio, 2020), as evidenced by their discourse when recalling memories and experiences.

Conceptions are cognitively constructed through personal processes wherein, instead of acquiring conceptual knowledge, individuals structure knowledge based on experience. This integration of knowledge occurs across various and extensive periods of life, drawing from information gathered in diverse contexts. These conceptions allow or restrict learning and determine people's behaviors. In addition, they are ideas that animate ways of thinking and doing in everyday life, and this is not necessarily done explicitly (Zimmerman, 2004).

Hereinafter, one of the five semantic networks pertaining to the analysis of the results and their discussion is presented; the one called "the conceptions of childhood". Next, the synthesis of the process emerges as the conclusions of

this study are presented, elucidating its connections and the profound intuitions of the researcher (Manen, 2016, p. 406).

## Conceptions of Childhood



**Figure 2.** Semantic network Conceptions of childhood.

Source: García, (2023, p. 159).

## **Conception of Childhood as a Stage of Development**

When queried about childhood, educators in Teacher Training Schools often lean towards a developmental stage conception, often drawing from their studies or information received regarding Piagetian stages. This reduction of childhood particularly pertains to one of the age classifications, commonly referred to as early childhood, encompassing the period from birth to 5 or 6 years of age—a boundary that varies and is culturally arbitrary. Let's examine some instances from the interviews with the teachers, where they refer to this concept:

TTS 2MEO49: "[...] a stage of life during which the child develops skills that will later enable them to have greater capacity for functioning, such as social interaction, autonomy, self-awareness, and various cognitive abilities. (Personal communication, August 20, 2020, own translation).

The category that emerges from the analysis is the conception of childhood as a stage of development. This is the most frequent and recurrent way of naming and representing childhood in teachers' discourses. For them, childhood is a stage that comprises different periods, named in different ways. It is assumed, then, that there is syncretism between childhood and infancy, and between infancy and early and later childhood. When teachers consider this concept, they envision children in early childhood education from zero to five years of age and in primary basic education. That would be childhood understood as a stage of development.

Understanding it as a developmental stage, there is a strong link to developmental theories, discourses of growth and development, and early childhood development (ECD). This category of discourse is not isolated; it is interrelated with childhood linked to vulnerability, the future, carefreeness, imagination and art, and childhood with a voice, which are described below.

## **Conception of Childhood Linked to Vulnerability**

The conception of childhood configured in modernity has a character of division between the adult and child worlds, based on characteristics such as the need to play, lack of knowledge and experience, carefreeness, vulnerability, among others. The latter is recurrent in the speeches provided by the teachers in training at the Teacher Training Schools, who typically adopt this way of thinking about childhood. One of the anecdotes from the teachers' experiences illustrates this point.

TTS 2MPO19: "[...] it is a stage in which there is a lot of vulnerability. The child, because they are a child, is already vulnerable due to the things they have and the way they live, how they interact. There is always a vulnerability that is dependence, but they can also be exposed to other conditions such as physical vulnerabilities. For example, genetic conditions may predispose them to certain issues, they may have some type of disability or disease that affects their physical development." (Personal communication, August 5, 2020, own translation).

Vulnerability is a way of naming children as "lacking," since they are far from achieving autonomy over self-care. It is clear from the perspective of human development that the intrauterine developmental process is incomplete compared to that of other animals. Similar to other higher mammals, human infants require adult care for their survival. However, the context in which the vulnerability of children is discussed by teachers extends beyond the dependency on adults. It is associated, based on the researcher's analysis, with issues such as the violation of rights, socioeconomic disparities, social vulnerability, inclusion, and, generally, with a view of children as lacking autonomy and unable to fend for themselves. In this social context, where basic needs are not met, children are at a much greater risk. There is no evidence of an idealistic discourse promoting autonomous childhoods or self-actualization. Instead, the discourse reflects the reality of deprived children.

In this sense, vulnerability is less related to the characteristics of Early Childhood Development (ECD), typical of human beings, and more aligned with a vision of adultcentrism where the child is not recognized as an autonomous subject. That is, vital decisions are largely influenced by age and what is considered maturity of the individual, both cognitively and affectively.

### **Conception of Childhood Linked to the Future**

This conception of childhood is ancient and has accompanied the thinking of cultures with Greco-Latin heritage. Since ancient times, children have been regarded as the future. This leads to a postponement of the child, who becomes significant only upon reaching adulthood. In this way of thinking about childhood, the future of the child's experience becomes the past of the adult (Mead, 2002); a conception that was strengthened in modernity and continues even in this historical and cultural moment, after the twentieth century, with the conception of rights ownership, because the cultural traces are deeply ingrained. The futurization of childhood as depicted in the teachers' narratives can be illustrated through one of the stories:



TTS 3RPPO10: [...] I contribute to it, to educate is to give the steps to the students so that they begin to visualize a future, so my future I see it being a doctor, a veterinarian, not only teach them to read and write but also that they themselves discover what they need and what they can assimilate for when they are young, so that they already visualize their future [...] so that they go as if starting to make a landing of what they want and can be in the future. (Personal communication, October 20, 2020, own translation).

These ideas of childhood, and what children are, are remnants of the Greco-Latin heritage that we maintain due to our history marked by the Spanish colony. Kohan (2004), as also noted by Durán (2015), in his conceptualization of childhood, draws from the Platonic writings of antiquity, retaining certain linguistic markers that continue to shape our understanding of children. One of these markers is characterized as "Childhood as the material of politics: the material of political dreams; discourse of necessity in perspective of a better future" (p. 46).

Teaching consists of preparing those who are not yet for when they will be. The subject is deferred in this conception, wherein the *subjectum*, the essential aspect of who one is, is not yet the possession of this being that is in formation. This also influences an idea of formation in which one is not yet a self as such but is the seed of who one will become. This conception of childhood, however, fails to acknowledge the child as an evolving subject with a developing sense of self. It denies the child's current subjectivity, relegating their personhood solely to adulthood.

One could highlight the underlying argument of this conception by taking it to its limits. For example, one could ask: When do you stop being in training and become a subject? When one becomes young or transitions to a school? Or, as the interviewed teacher suggests, at what point do children cease to think like children, devoid of a voice, and therefore become competent to choose, discern, and understand themselves?

The answer is simple, but not easy. Progressive laws maintain that individuals, regardless of age, always possess these capacities. Such is the case in Argentina, where Law 26,743 of 2012 allows individuals to change the registration of their gender identity at any time. There is no requirement for medical treatment, including for children, and in their daily lives, individuals are entitled to use their chosen first name.

This marks an international shift in perspective, where children are viewed not merely as recipients of guidance from adult caregivers who make decisions on their behalf, but as individuals entitled to their own rights. The law stipulates that parents may object, but it also considers what is deemed to be in the child's

best interest and considers the child's input. Therefore, in the case of a boy or girl who wishes to change their gender, after completing the process of changing their name in the civil registry, there is an administrative requirement for schools and communities to address them by their chosen name (Stewart et al., 2020).

Consequently, when children are denied the opportunity to exercise their rights as equal subjects, their sense of agency and future prospects are undermined. This marginalization is evident in everyday school practices. Those who witness the daily schooling scene can discern whether the child is regarded as a subject of rights by observing the stance manifested in teachers' discourse and practices. From their conceptions, they respond to the child's voice, choices, personal belongings, or the exercise of free personality development. It is in their reflection on their practices where they reveal that they persist in envisioning the child's future without transcending the heteronomous role of the student.

### **Conception of Childhood Linked to Carelessness**

Negligence, vulnerability, and deprivation are characteristic features of the modern conception of childhood, as the child is perceived as being heteronomous. This trait, evident in teachers' discourse as they reflect on childhood through their experiences, reflects an adult concern for ensuring that children are able to fully experience childhood during their formative years. A commendable concern, stemming from both the conception of modern childhood and the contemporary understanding thereof. Adults, especially those who are teachers, serve as guarantors and contributors to ensuring that childhood retains its essence. One of the representative accounts reflecting this position of teachers is as follows:

TTS 1CPO15: I think childhood is a time when children should be able to be happy and not be too worried or distressed. Unfortunately, there are children who already worry about economic, social, political, and other situations at a very young age. That's not right. Childhood should be a time to enjoy, play, and be very happy. (Personal communication, August 5, 2020, own translation).

Here begins a contrast to the vision of the child which emphasizes the child as a subject requiring protection. As historian Philippe Ariès (1987) observed, this perspective prioritizes constant "vigilance" over the child. This emanating from the modern conception. Children were encapsulated in schools so that they would not access the secrets of adult life, because Rousseau defined them as different beings. This conception of childhood as a time to be happy, and the desire for

this condition to prevail throughout childhood, closely aligns with the vision of UNICEF, which is worth quoting:

Being a few years old is not equivalent to experiencing childhood. Adults envy children because childhood is perceived as a worry-free period, where the primary focus is on growing up and learning to navigate life. But childhood can be lost very early in life; when someone experiences significant challenges during childhood, we often say that "they have suddenly become an adult. (World State of Childhood cited by UNICEF and OEI, 2008, p. 15, own translation).

Here, the distinction is made between modern childhood, characterized by carefreeness, and childhood, which is a chronological and legal category. This is very important to demarcate the rights of children, and the issuance of laws in nation-states that guarantee these rights before the careless way in which adults become co-responsible for their upbringing. It is desirable that this condition be experienced in the first years of life, in childhood; however, this does not imply that childhood is exhausted simply by turning eighteen. Childhood does not inevitably belong to children; it belongs to human beings regardless of their age.

Arendt et al. (1993) have an interesting way of referring to this, as they argue that there is a problem with the line that divides children from adults. This line assumes that adults cannot learn new things or be treated as if they were the same as children. Likewise, they argue that it is not a rule dependent on age, as it depends on different factors in each socio-cultural context.

This shows how the separation between the adult world and the child world is being observed as a critical scenario challenging the fundamental assumptions of modern childhood, linked only to chronological age, and present whenever children can exercise their rights in accordance with adult-centric dispositions. This presents a critical problem of contemporaneity that transcends discussions about schooling and initial teacher training.

### **Conception of Childhood with Voice**

The ancient definition of childhood, meaning voiceless, has been perpetuated for centuries as a general rule to treat those excluded from the adult-centric, patriarchal world – or, if you prefer, heteropatriarchal – because that was the norm in Western culture. Throughout the twentieth century, attempts were made to give children a voice through active pedagogies, bills of rights, media exposure, etc. Hearing the voices of teachers who are beginning to conceive children with

a voice is a transformative panorama for the context of teacher education. For example, one of the PFC teachers recounts her experience as follows:

TTS 3RPO24: Listening to them, returning the word. Yesterday, I watched a lecture by Carlos Skliar about conversations, specifically focusing on the strategy of conversation in the classroom. He highlighted the potential of conversations to facilitate learning among students. Instead of merely repeating information, engaging in conversations allows teachers to create an environment where children can learn together. [...] I think it is to identify what are those conditions that they have? As I mentioned just now, there are conditions for which we, as teachers, hold significant responsibility and have many possibilities. (Personal communication, February 28, 2020, own translation).

The contemporary conception begins to emerge among the professors of the PFC through the appropriation of state-of-the-art knowledge. In this case, reference is made to a renowned Latin American author, Carlos Skliar, who acknowledges childhood as a category that extends beyond chronological age. However, the argumentation doesn't solely rely on this; the interviewed teacher mentions it in relation to giving voice back to the child. In this sense, the conception of children as subjects of rights in the twentieth century has led to a profound transformation of the ancient concept of the voiceless child (*infantia*), which necessitated adults to speak on their behalf to ensure recognition of their rights. Now, there is a strong conviction that at the very least, children's voices should be heard and, more importantly, considered.

Some children, such as Greta Thunberg, Francisco Vera, Fernando de Lucio, Aleida Ruiz Sosa, and Malala, have gained exposure on digital media platforms and use their platforms to demand a change in the way contemporary childhoods are addressed. They advocate against being treated as minors due to the semantic baggage associated with that term.

The next step in pedagogical reflection on children's development, if we aim to address the adult-centric and autocratic tendencies denounced by children, would involve critically examining the human model used for their education. This entails moving away from a condescending stance towards children and instead making efforts to truly listen to them, use respectful language, avoid stigmatization, provide comprehensive information, and integrate gender perspectives into discourse. This emerging stance, evident in the discourses of teachers involved in PFC training, represents a significant step forward—a window of opportunity for developing a more nuanced understanding of childhood and contemporary childhood.

## Contemporary Conception of Childhood

The contemporary conception of childhood entails viewing this category as integral to the human condition, distinct from mere age and biology. It refers to childhood as a dimension that allows adults to experience rebirth, projections, dreams, and creativity; traits that were traditionally associated with childhood until recently. Contemporary childhood is shaped by multiple sciences and disciplines. In today's world, where birth rates are declining and life expectancy is increasing, adults are aging more slowly, resulting in a larger population of young people. Teachers perceive the cultural change and make it evident by recognizing themselves as infants being adults.

TTS 3REO25: "[...] or sometimes when you go out with friends, with family, you even become a child. You forget that you are already an adult who should not behave like a child. You start playing with small children and things like that, which can be done with certain family members. For example, with my mother, I am very spoiled, so I am both a mother and a girl with my father [...]" (Personal communication, August 5, 2020, own translation).

Contemporary childhood is situated within the realm of the human condition, conceived as a socio-historical construct rather than a purely biological phenomenon (Postman, 1983; Bárcena, 2002; Bárcena, 2009; Marias, 2005; Narodowski, 2016; Skliar, 2012). This modern cultural framework, which delineated a separation between children and adults, traces its origins to Rousseau's romantic theories (Ariès, 1987; Arendt et al., 1993; DeMause, 1991; Caril, 2011; Kohan, 2004). The division of society, fundamentally rooted in the establishment of certain topics as secrets (Elías, 1993; Postman, 1983; Manen, 2016; Mead, 2002), was structured in a way that access to these secrets was granted only after experiencing certain life moments or events. Knowledge about children began to have a place in words, customs, traditions, libraries, and eventually in school.

This division of the world has weakened over time, particularly with the advent of screens. Initially, it began with television screens and now extends to smartphones, computers, tablets, and other forms of communication that flatten the asymmetry between adults and children. The control over secrets no longer rests solely with adults such as parents, caregivers, or teachers. Instead, it resides in the contents of television, where the portrayal of children is often influenced by adult-centric perspectives.

What all this implies, I believe, is that our culture is offering fewer and fewer reasons and opportunities for children. TV creates a communication context that

fosters the idea that childhood is neither desirable nor necessary, suggesting that children are not needed. When I mentioned the end of childhood, I did not mean the physical disappearance of children, although in some contexts, this is also occurring. Our birth rate has been decreasing for the past decade, resulting in the closure of schools across the country. (Postman, 1983, p. 20, own translation).

Some Latin Americans, like Carlos Skliar, align with Postman in distinguishing childhood from infancy, as evidenced in this research and through similar arguments. Additionally, it aligns with the unsustainability of modern childhood within today's educational institutions.

When referring to childhood as part of the human condition, one also observes a similar phenomenon in adults who are increasingly resistant to old age; for example, Narodowski refers to this phenomenon as "a world without adults." Children are being treated as adults without the mediation of family or school, influenced by the knowledge presented to them by the media. On the contrary, adults are beginning to resemble children more and more. There are multiple indicators that these characteristics of modern childhood present themselves unashamedly in adulthood throughout one's life because childhood is part of the life journey. For example, theories of development have migrated from focusing solely on childhood to encompassing all stages of life, including adulthood and even death.

Childhood is a category linked to the human condition, of a socio-historical nature, unrelated to age and the strict relationship with childhood. It is desirable from every point of view to live intensely in this period before the age of eighteen, but such intensity is not limited to youth; it can be linked to new experiences at any time in life. Viewed as births, they are an awakening of the childlike condition, even though one may be chronologically an adult or physically aged. We have noticed that the division of adults and children has faded in this cultural shift that some call "prefigurative" (Mead, 2002), others, liquid modernity (Bauman, 2003) postmodernity (Latour, 2007). Finally, it is evident to many that the distinctions between childhood and other stages of life are now less clear and asymmetrical. Teachers-in-training and trainers in TTS notice this, but without access to these frameworks.

However, among all adults, children must be guaranteed childhood. An African proverb, as quoted by Marina and referenced by Mesonero (2008), states that 'To educate a child, you need the whole tribe,' a sentiment with which the school teachers concur. They observe that ensuring children's rights is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders. They emphasize the essential relationship between schools and families as human and socio-historical institutions. These institutions are established and maintained for primary and secondary

socialization (Poza et al., 2004) and, simultaneously, for safeguarding children's rights (Álvarez-Uria & Varela, 1991). In the relationship between school and family, not only are the educational rights of boys and girls enshrined, but all their rights. This obligation is mandated by existing legislation, such as the Code of Children and Adolescents (2006).

## Discussion

Three distinct generations of teachers, who play key roles in teacher training in Caldas, have contributed their anecdotes, knowledge, and experience to the development of this process. The synthesis concludes by summarizing both the teachers' statements and the researcher's inferences. As this is a phenomenological process and in the pursuit of consistency with Van Manen's perspective, it aims to emphasize profound intuitions (Manen, 2016, p. 406), which transcend mere opinion.

Conceptions are ideas constructed from life experiences, reflecting what happens to us (Skliar, 2003; Larrosa et al., 2018; Larrosa, 2003). However, experience alone is not sufficient; it must undergo the process of reflection to reach the level of significance sought by researchers. This implies that teachers who narrate their experiences must reflect on past events, analyze those situations, and construct a narrative using their thoughts and insights. From theories of the mind, it is evident that only the individual themselves possess privileged access to their mental states. Their ability to use language, acquired from the surrounding environment, allows them to express these states, which are then recorded in text and rigorously analyzed to attain understandings that inevitably reflect aspects of reality. These individuals have undergone teacher training experiences in various roles: as regular school students, as teachers within the program responsible for training new educators, and as mentors guiding others in pedagogical practices. Through these experiences, they have developed a cognitive framework that informs their approaches to understanding childhood.

Regarding the conceptions of childhood expressed in teachers' discourses, it is noteworthy that one of the most prevalent is the view of childhood as both a stage of life and a stage of development, often referred to as "early childhood" or the "kindergarten age". Notably influenced by Piaget's theory of cognitive development, it makes it a determinant in teachers' thinking.

This decisive perspective in the conception of childhood represents a snapshot of the phenomenon, wherein teachers' discourses are characterized

by being rooted in somewhat superficial or unsubstantial formative experiences. In the academic context, despite the explicit or implicit reference to Piaget, the understanding of the theory appears to be superficial, lacking foundation, elementary, and apparent. Discourses that perceive childhood as merely a stage of development, adhering to purist, scholarly, and enlightened positions expected in tertiary education environments, become distant. It is a reproduction of words lacking depth, which obscures contemporary theories of childhood behind this discourse, barely perceptible in their conceptions. Some PFC teachers acknowledge the historical evolution of the concept of childhood, recognizing the limited attention given throughout human history to understanding children and the significance of studying childhood.

The identity of the Teacher Training School as an institution has been shaped since its inception by the connection between childhood and pedagogy. In the context of the Teacher Training School's survival, this connection with childhood and pedagogy provides them with the capacity to maintain a place in the world. The field of early childhood or basic education becomes their niche for work, development, research, and prestige (de Guzmán, 1986).

Another prevailing conception in Teacher Training Schools is the Rousseauian idea of the division between the adult world and that of children, a notion that has come under scrutiny in recent times by scholars such as Arendt (1993), Bárcena (2009), Narodowski (2016), and Postman (1983), among others. While it can be argued that this idea is revolutionary, it also sparks new controversies and is challenging to accept because it disrupts established norms of the twentieth century, along with discourses and practices related to the shaping of contemporary childhood and perceptions of childhood abstractions. So, to this day, this topic remains largely undiscussed in Teacher Training Schools, and contemporary ideas continue to be obscured from teachers.

In none of the Teacher Training Schools does the discussion about the contemporary cultural changes involving childhood, as outlined in the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy, appear (Mead, 2002), which implies an acknowledgment of the "disappearance of modern childhood." It is evident that when the researcher questions them, there is a sense of nostalgia for the children who are forced to mature early, becoming someone different from the children who were once taught by teachers trained in the traditional Teacher Training School tradition during the twentieth century (Valencia, 2006; Loaiza, 2009). This theory is no longer enough for them to understand the changing culture and children of the present.

It is evident that the sense of longing for missing childhood is anchored in one's own experience. This is a natural phenomenon in human beings, as the conception of childhood has been developed and understood through experiencing



childhood itself, through daily interactions with children at school, which serves as a social mechanism to separate them from the adult world. This presupposes as natural the existence of children, even to the extent of reducing them to the category of students, as it's impossible to separate the status of being a child from schooling.

It's evident that understanding early childhood as a developmental stage is not insignificant, as it contributes to comprehending children in pedagogical practice. It's essential to enhance our comprehension of childhood by distinguishing it from other related categories such as early child development, early childhood, and childhood studies. In all cultures, the delineation of life stages is arbitrary and largely contingent on cultural perceptions. Therefore, it's relevant to acknowledge alternative categories beyond age and biology to grasp contemporary childhoods and address the challenges of education in the future. The societal shift in attitudes towards childhood has spurred the emergence of a distinct field of study known as *Childhood Studies*. This interdisciplinary domain brings together various sciences and academic disciplines, influenced by diverse theoretical perspectives, but primarily shaped by political considerations. Its proximity to the quest for economic development underscores its significance in understanding and addressing contemporary issues surrounding childhood.

In teachers' discourses, the prevailing conception of modern childhood is characterized by traits such as vulnerability, imagination, carefree exploration, the assertion of rights, and a forward-looking perspective. Modern childhood is built from the 17th century to the end of the 20th century. Being a child throughout the twentieth century entailed adults' protection, the gradual unveiling of the mysteries of adulthood, and safeguarding their vulnerability against the perils of the world and the solitude of self. All of this unfolded within a pedagogical landscape grounded in moral discourses that refined the perception of the child within the realm of school education, culminating in the reduction of the child's identity to that of a mere student. In this sense, Narodowski's (1999) thesis on the reduction of the child to a student is masterful:

Being a student in the modern school institution essentially entails occupying a heteronomous position of not-knowing, in contrast to the figure of the teacher, an autonomous adult who possesses knowledge. Therefore, schooling essentially involves the process of infantilization of a segment of the population, who will then be reintegrated into school but as "students". Everyone who assumes the role of a student must relinquish their autonomy regarding their knowledge and position themselves in a dependent and heteronomous manner in front of a teacher who will determine what is taught. The school erased the prior knowledge of the students unless it fully coincided with what it aimed to transmit. Being

a student in the modern school institution involved occupying a space for the inscription of knowledge and powers; a vulnerable body that must be shaped, disciplined, and educated according to pre-established socio-political utopias and methodological guidelines (p. 42, own translation).

The modern student became the object of schoolwork, a process of objectification that generates the universal idea of a child prefigured biologically and pedagogically. Students will be presented with the objects of the world chosen by adults to remove it from its crude initial condition, and you will seek humanity within it or place it upon it, preparing it for a life that seemingly begins when one ceases to be a child.

The contemporary conception of childhood moves beyond the notion of age as the sole determinant, it is therefore a concept that is not biological, having nothing to do with strength or deterioration; it is the narrative. Human life has an argument, it has a projective structure (Marías, 2005, own translation). It is important that, within the Teacher Training Schools (TTS), in alignment with their identity and purpose, there is a deeper exploration of the characteristics of contemporary childhoods. This exploration should move away from the foundational assumption of modernity regarding the absolute importance of age.

Authors like Julián Marías not only suggest the arbitrariness of life stages but also acknowledge the evolving nature of these stages in contemporary times. Old age and decline have been postponed, and there are continual new projects and births, even in advanced age (Arendt et al., 1993; Bárcena, 2009). The ages of life are not merely chronological or legal constructs; rather, they are deeply intertwined with our experiences and what unfolds in our lives, shaping who we are (Larrosa, 2003). In this regard, experiences such as births, learning processes, vulnerability, or maturity are not exclusive to a particular human group defined solely by the number of years they have lived. Childhood, therefore, permeates all stages of life, not solely defined by the predominant sentiments dictated by adults toward children (Ariès, 1987). In a world where even adults are seen as eternal, vulnerable youths (Narodowski, 2016), the result is that both these cognitive perceptions of human beings and their education are being left behind.

A characteristic of the conception of contemporary childhoods is the disappearance of children or what was once perceived as modern childhood, which could be seen as a postmodern artifice signaling the demise of numerous categories toward the end of the 20th century (Latour, 2007; García, 2007). This represents a necessary deconstruction of modern childhood as we know it, prompted by the cultural traits exhibited by children that differ from those that shaped the cognition and culture of modernity. It could be argued that childhood as a category is under construction, as a cultural and cognitive transformation

emerging today is evident from various fields and modes of naming, pluralizing the once singular modern conception. Hence, contemporary childhoods are being discussed theoretically today.

This "contemporary" conception, which pluralizes childhoods, is categorized by researchers such as Narodowski and Baquero (1994) [Narodowski, 1999; 2016], while others refer to childhoods, such as Alvarado and Lobet (2013). In its plural form, it implies more than a demise; it signifies a transformative link with the socio-cultural and socio-historical realms of cultural change that modern childhood has encountered. The emergence of childhood in modernity reshaped society (Ariès, 1987), consequently influencing the design of schools (Comenius, 1657) and their subsequent implementation (Álvarez-Uria & Varela, 1991). It also gave rise to moral discourses that led to the development of pedagogy (Runge, 2017; Rousseau, 2000), and the establishment of teacher training institutions (Valencia, 2006; Báez, 2005; de Guzmán, 1986). The interconnection between childhood, schooling, pedagogy, and teacher training imbues significance and identity to the Teacher Training School as an institution. However, this historical narrative, which is both present and future-oriented, has not been embraced with a sense of identity. Consequently, there is a risk that Teacher Training Schools may face extinction in the near future, as witnessed in many countries (de Guzmán, 1986).

The emerging thoughts that teachers articulate in their speeches were challenging for them to name, describe, and comprehend. The cognition shaped through experience, referred to here as "conceptions," dictates the ways of acting, feeling, thinking, and portraying childhoods within the specific context of pedagogical practice. The potency of conceptions resides in their capacity to either enable or constrain the assimilation of new information, to imbue meaning into practical actions, and ultimately to shape the professional behaviors and practices of teachers. When conceptions are rooted in reductions of what can now be understood as contemporary childhoods, teacher training processes follow suit, owing to the synergistic relationship between conceptions and practices.

## Conclusions

Various ways of conceptualizing childhood emerge in the teachers' discourses, exhibiting clear syncretism with different stages of life and the notion of developmental stages. An evident reference to Piagetian psycho-pedagogical theory, which has permeated the academic landscape of teacher training across the

educational system. At the core of these studies lies biology, shaping a perspective rooted in the natural sciences that constrains childhood to a genetic preordained transition between different stages of life for all human beings.

Childhood, as a category, is a construct of human society, defined by the attribution of certain characteristics and a designated position within societal thought (Ortiz, 2006). As a category, childhood is subject to conceptualization, description, investigation, and analysis, which aim to break it down for better understanding. This is particularly emphasized in teacher training environments through the lens of social sciences, including sociology, anthropology, history, and even elements of philosophy.

Human beings construct conceptions based on their experiences of the world, which are symbolic (Alvarado & Lobet, 2013). Arendt (1993) critically argues that Rousseau's conceptualization of childhood, which divided the world into adults and children, was an error due to the resulting division it created. Similarly, while Rousseau is acknowledged as the father of modern pedagogy, it is widely recognized by contemporary authors that Philippe Ariès brought childhood to prominence as a category for scholarly inquiry in the twentieth century. This has made childhood a subject of research within the fields of social sciences and humanities.

Ariès's insight is that childhood, as a category, emerged in modernity due to new attitudes and sentiments towards children that were previously nonexistent. Several authors, including Lebrun (1975), Elías (1993), Njenga (1987), Ariès (1987), Vincent et al. (1992), Narodowski and Baquero (1994), Trisciuzzi and Cambi (1993), and Narodowski (1999), converge on the recognition of Ariès as the historian or sociologist of childhood. Other scholars who align with this perspective include Mead (2002), Alzate (2003), Bárcena (2009, 2006), Enesco (2009), Runge (2017), Martínez (2013), and Narodowski (2016), all of whom attribute the conceptualization of childhood to the pioneering work of Ariès. It is noteworthy that upon conducting an epistemological analysis of these authors and their theoretical frameworks, they are situated within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and history.

Childhood is not a biological category (Postman, 1983); it is one of thought, constructed by human beings. It is important to distinguish the concept of childhood from developmental stages, which are, in fact, social constructs. Different societies divide developmental stages in various ways, and this division is arbitrary, adopted for the sake of social discourse. This phenomenon is referred to as 'social construction,' which entails an understanding of reality shaped by the subjective perceptions or assumptions shared by members of a particular society at a given time (Papalia et al., 2009).

The above is intended to demonstrate that those who write about childhood, for the most part, do so from a historical, sociological, anthropological, or pedagogical perspective. In this sense, philosophers, educators, or researchers in education seek to understand the relationship between childhood and schooling. In response to the crisis in education and the erosion of childhood within the context of modernity, there is a growing focus on reimagining educational and training methodologies.

The teachers of the TTS of Caldas are closer to the conception of a childhood staged from biology and psychology. With the prevailing conception of childhood and a significant gap identified in the alignment between this conception and pedagogical practices, there is an evident and pressing need for teacher training to be updated. Despite the challenges, there is cause for optimism as some teachers in the PFCs have begun to explore childhood readings as a socio-historical category, thus recognizing the connections between childhood and pedagogy.

Teachers express confusion when attempting to determine whether childhood, like childhood, concludes at eighteen, as they acknowledge childlike traits within themselves as adults. They recognize that childhood transcends age and encompasses abilities such as playfulness, imagination, creativity, and vulnerability, as well as the capacity to initiate personal processes and projects, learn, grow, and embrace carefree or messy endeavors. These are characteristics of human behavior that can occur at any time in life.

Contemporary childhoods are diverse, stemming from the historical evolution of the category. At least three forms of construction are recognized: those of the old regime, characterized by the voiceless child and the abuses perpetrated against them; that of modernity, emerging in Western society from the seventeenth century, which was psychopedagogically reduced to the category of student and culturally and legally evolved into recognizing children as subjects with rights in the twentieth century; and contemporary childhoods, which are hyper- or derealized (Narodowski, 1999; 2016).

Teachers in training in the Caldas schools make sense of modern childhood. It's crucial to emphasize that these constructions are representative across all three layers of teachers interviewed. This indicates that within the context, there has been a lack of sufficient theoretical exploration into the frameworks of contemporary childhoods. These frameworks now distinguish childhood from infancy and Early Childhood Development (ECD), placing childhood along the entire trajectory of life. They focus on comprehending the significance of intervening in early cognitive development to enhance the effectiveness of pedagogical practices in shaping individuals' lives.

The ways in which teachers conceptualize childhood, children, developmental stages, schooling, teacher training, and pedagogy are cognitive constructs that profoundly shape their interactions with children and the surrounding community. Embracing a cognitive framework rooted in contemporary theories of childhood can foster an understanding of its essential role within Teacher Training Schools. This understanding can then inform efforts to enhance pedagogy and research within the teacher training context, ultimately empowering educators who are entrusted with shaping childhood development.

Teachers are always in training and can modify their conceptions, their cognition and, therefore, their ways of conducting pedagogical practices. Throughout the identified categories, significant issues requiring attention have emerged, shaped by the cognitive frameworks of teacher groups. These issues often recur without thorough reflection. Specifically, mention is made of principles outlined by Ariès, such as courtesy and vigilance, alongside concepts like adultcentrism and adultracy, which children actively highlight within societal dynamics. Moreover, the role of the family in fulfilling the teacher's communal responsibilities is emphasized. Teacher training scenarios could engage in discussions critiquing the prevailing model of human beings, aiming to instigate change within pedagogy.

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# Task Regulation and Communication of High- and Low-performing Groups during the Execution of Collaborative Tasks\*

[English Version]

Regulación de la tarea y la comunicación en grupos de bajo y alto rendimiento durante la ejecución de tareas colaborativas

Regulação da tarefa e da comunicação em grupos de baixo e alto desempenho durante o desenvolvimento de tarefas colaborativas

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This paper reports the findings of a regulation task and communication during the development and execution of collaborative tasks in both high- and low-

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performing groups. **Methodology:** A qualitative and interpretative approach with a multiple-case study design was employed (Yin, 2006). The study examined interaction episodes related to the social regulation of tasks and communication captured in video recordings. The study involved the participation of first-semester students pursuing an online master's degree in education in the city of Manizales, Colombia (n= 15). Participants were organized into five spontaneously formed groups. **Results:** Findings revealed differences in both task regulation and communication. This promoted an understanding of the group dynamics concerning task regulation and communication and their influence on academic success. **Conclusions:** High-performing groups demonstrated task regulation and communication features, offering insights into academic success and the development of genuinely collaborative tasks.

**Key words:** collaborative learning; task regulation; communication regulation (UNESCO Thesaurus of Educational Psychology).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** se reportan los hallazgos de una investigación en la que se tuvo por objetivo examinar la regulación de la tarea y de la comunicación, durante el desarrollo y ejecución de tareas colaborativas en grupos de alto y bajo rendimiento. **Metodología:** se optó por un enfoque cualitativo de tipo interpretativo con diseño de estudios de casos múltiple (Yin, 2006). Para el estudio se analizaron episodios de interacción relacionados con la regulación social de la tarea y la comunicación registrados en grabaciones de video. El estudio contó con la participación de (n= 15) estudiantes de primer semestre de una maestría en educación en modalidad virtual de la ciudad de Manizales, Colombia. Los participantes se distribuyeron en cinco grupos de trabajo constituidos de manera espontánea. **Resultados:** los resultados permitieron identificar diferencias en la regulación de la tarea y de la comunicación. Esto facilitó comprender la dinámica en los grupos relacionada con la regulación de la tarea y la comunicación y su impacto en el éxito académico. **Conclusiones:** los grupos de alto rendimiento presentan características en la regulación de la tarea y de la comunicación que podrían ayudar en la comprensión del éxito académico y desarrollo de tareas genuinamente colaborativas.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje colaborativo; regulación de la tarea; regulación de la comunicación (Tesoro de la UNESCO de Psicología de la educación).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** relatam-se os resultados de uma pesquisa cujo objetivo era examinar a regulação da tarefa e da comunicação durante o desenvolvimento e a execução de tarefas colaborativas em grupos de alto e baixo desempenho. **Metodologia:** optou-se por uma abordagem qualitativa interpretativa com um projeto de estudo de casos múltiplos (Yin, 2006). O estudo analisou episódios de interação relacionados à regulação social da tarefa e da comunicação registrados em gravações de vídeo. O estudo envolveu a participação de 15 alunos do primeiro semestre de um mestrado virtual em educação na cidade de Manizales, Colômbia. Os participantes foram distribuídos em cinco grupos de trabalho constituídos espontaneamente. **Resultados:** os resultados permitiram a identificação de diferenças na regulação da tarefa e da comunicação, o que facilitou a compreensão da dinâmica dos grupos em relação à regulação da tarefa e da comunicação e seu impacto no sucesso acadêmico. **Conclusões:** os grupos de alto desempenho apresentam características na regulação da tarefa e na comunicação que podem contribuir para a compreensão do sucesso acadêmico e o desenvolvimento de tarefas genuinamente colaborativas.

**Palavras-chave:** aprendizagem colaborativa; regulação da tarefa; regulação da comunicação (Tesouro de Psicologia Educacional da UNESCO).

## Introduction

The social regulation of learning contexts is critical to academic success and student achievement. In educational settings, observing groups of students exhibiting varying levels of achievement is common; some excel, while others face difficulties making progress. This disparity can be attributed, in part, to variations in the social regulation of learning within these groups and, particularly, in how participants manage tasks and communication among group members (Baker, 2015; Baker et al., 2012; Koivuniemi et al., 2018; McCaslin & Murdock, 1991; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001).

The article aims to report the social regulation of learning contexts regarding collaborative task regulation and communication in collaborative processes in both high- and low-performing groups. The impact of social regulation processes, peer interaction, collaboration, and mutual support on students' academic performance is analyzed. Furthermore, this study examines how high-performing groups appear to foster more effective social regulation strategies, whereas low-performing groups may encounter challenges in this regard (Panadero et al., 2015; Panadero & Järvelä, 2015; Rogat & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2011; Rogat & Adams-Wiggins, 2014).

A comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying social regulation of learning concerning task and communication within distinct achievement groups will further display opportunities for enhancing the academic performance of students at large (Rogat & Adams-Wiggins, 2015; Sobonciski et al., 2021; Zheng & Huang, 2016). Additionally, the development of strategies focused on task management and communication during the execution of collaborative tasks holds significance. These strategies contribute to improvement, academic success, and ultimately, the successful completion of group exercises.

Finally, acknowledging the significance of social regulation of learning in student achievement can foster a comprehensive understanding of the educational environment for the benefit of students, regardless of their current level of achievement (Hadwin et al., 2017; Perea et al., 2009).

Aligned with the above and to address the formulated objective, this study examined task regulation and communication during collaborative task execution in high- and low-performing groups. Data analysis comprised a concise description of task regulation and communication and examining the events constituting these aspects. Subsequently, the methodological section is presented paving the way for the analysis, results, and discussion. Lastly, the conclusion section presents the study findings.



## Social Task Regulation

According to Perea et al. (2009), Janssen et al. (2012), and Hadwin et al. (2017), task regulation is construed as the interaction among group members. This involves acknowledging individual and distributed responsibilities and emphasizing the importance of both group roles and dynamics. The task regulation was examined from seven events adapted from the framework proposed and documented by Perea et al. (2009), Janssen et al. (2012) and Hadwin et al. (2017).

Categorically, these events are defined as judgments of the task, task comprehension, information exchange, organization of information, goal setting, execution, and reflection on the task. Conceptually, "judgments of the task" encompass diverse conceptions formed by the group concerned. This may include aspects related to the task's difficulty, disagreements regarding execution, criticisms concerning the task's usefulness, or expectations associated with its execution. "Task comprehension" pertains specifically to the knowledge and conceptualization the group possesses regarding the topic or task to be addressed in the academic exercise.

The third event involves the "information exchange". This comprises contributions from group members regarding task-related information or documentation. These contributions serve as a foundation and argumentative support for task execution. Certain elements relevant to this event pertain to the interactions linked with the quality of contributions suggested by group members, alongside their considerations regarding logistical issues governing task execution and the subsequent developmental processes.

Following this is the "Organization of Information" event. This event describes how the group emphasizes components of the information hierarchy through its interactions and integrates them into the collective activity of task generation and execution. As a result, the information exchange focuses on elucidating how the group may progressively establish a task plan. This emphasizes the group's overt perspective on their common goals and aspirations. In this regard, the group examines collective and individual direction toward the achievement of shared objectives.

Finally, there are related to the "task execution" and "task reflection." The former encompasses interactions elucidating the methods or strategies employed by the group in executing the task. Particularly, this event attempts to highlight the group's execution of the task, delineating the most discussed aspects, and the most challenging ones.

The last event, "reflection on the task", is understood as a metacognitive activity undertaken by the group members upon the task completion. This form of

reflection tends to be more prevalent in high-performing groups. It encompasses the main aspects deliberated during the interaction, the quality of the exercise undertaken, the favorable perception of the outcome achieved by the group, and an assessment of the performance attained by the group members throughout the task execution.

## **Social Regulation of Communication**

Theoretically, communication as self-regulated learning explains the group interaction throughout task planning, execution, and reflection. Furthermore, how group members use the information provided by each other to strategically regulate their learning processes, to meet their objectives during the execution of collaborative tasks (Winne & Hadwin, 1998; Järvelä & Hadwin, 2013).

Communication regarding studying as self-regulated learning also encompasses a series of events. Regulation of communication involves four distinct events: group questioning, negotiation of objectives, adaptation of task perception, and goal-setting adjustment.

The initial event "group questioning" refers to measures performed to elucidate concepts, comprehend task requirements or assessment methods, and address issues concerning opinions and operational uncertainties which are critical for proper task completion. Such aspects significantly influence the group's ability to reach consensus on objectives. This consensus is understood as the acknowledgment of agreements by the group, accomplished through the harmonization of their perspectives on the task and its execution. The "negotiation of objectives" as a communicative event holds paramount importance as it fosters the adaptation of group members' perceptions regarding the task. In this regard, such adaptation occurs through dialogues among group members to agree on reconciling diverse viewpoints, clarifying task requirements, or addressing technical aspects. These dialogues favor adjusting conceptions held by different group members, which could otherwise hinder task completion.

The "adaptation of task perception" occurs when group members effectively manage their opinions and viewpoints. The group members' perception of the task facilitates communicative techniques for aligning their objectives with the requirements of the learning task.

The fourth and final event is the "adaptation of goals" which encompasses the actions to execute the task. It also includes the strategies for gathering information and task completion. This involves cognitive and procedural resources; such as understanding concepts and definitions, management of platforms, software, etc., which will allow for successful management of the task to be developed.

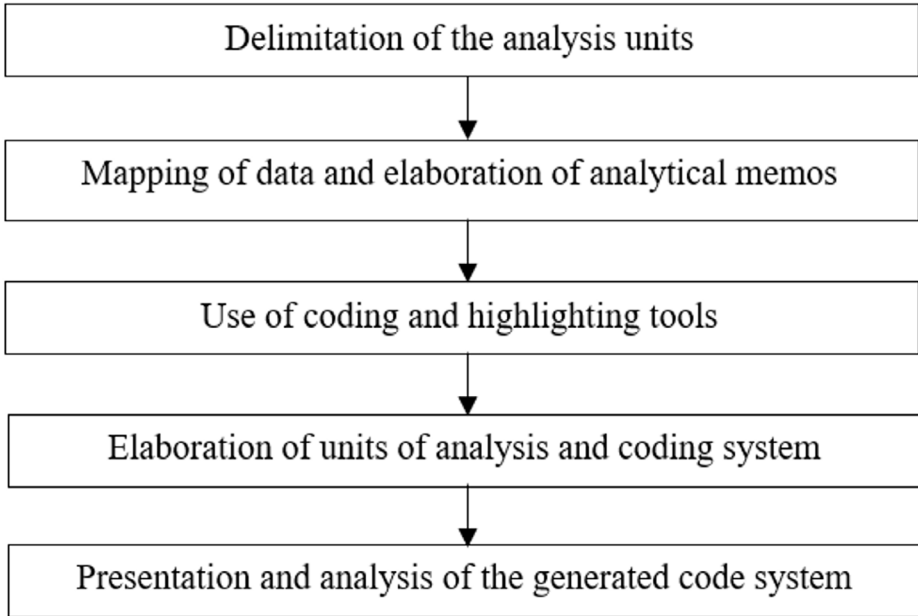
From a collaborative framework perspective, the events of task regulation contribute to achieving desired outcomes aligned with the dynamics and requirements of the learning task that are feasible to evidence at a cognitive, motivational, and behavioral level and, in turn, operate as elements that allow characterizing and accounting for what happens with group regulation during the process of executing a specific task collaboratively.

## Methodology

The methodological approach adopted in this study corresponds to an interpretive paradigm (Erickson, 1986). This qualitative approach facilitated the interaction among the various group members during the synchronous sessions. These sessions were recorded on video during the eight weeks of the group activity. The procedures of task regulation and communication, resulting from the activities of the five working groups were subject to analysis through a multiple-case study methodology (Yin, 1989). An inductive content analysis method was used to facilitate the interpretation of the video transcripts from the synchronous group work sessions. Data processing was conducted using MAXQDA personal license software.

Group monitoring was selected as the unit of analysis. This action is permanently conducted by the group during task completion. It is feasible that it is tracked from brief episodes that occur in each of the events involved in the components of regulation and collaboration in group work situations and, ideally, in situations of authentic collaboration (Sobonciniski et al., 2021).

The following outlines the methodological pathway to analyze video data utilizing the MAXQDA software.



**Figure 1.** *Design for Qualitative Content Analysis Using the MAXQDA Software Program*

Source: Author's Elaboration based on Mayring (2014).

### **Participants and Groups**

Five groups of first-semester postgraduate students enrolled in a master's program in education at a private university in Colombia participated in online sessions. Participation was voluntary, based on research interest during the first week of admission to the postgraduate program. The groups were classified into low- and high-performing groups: low-performing group (LG-), average-performing group (AG+), and high-performing group (HG++). Table 1 depicts the interrelationship among the groups.

**Table 1.** *Groups and Number of Group Members*

<b>Group</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>Group Formation</b>	<b>M (SD) of age</b>
Group 1	3	2 male and 1 female.	43,7 (4,73)
Group 2	2	2 male	47,0 (4,24)
Group 3	2	2 male	30,5 (4,95)
Group 4	4	3 male and 1 female	32,0 (9,49)
Group 5	2	1 male and 1 female	31,5 (13,44)

The performance of each group in the collaborative task was measured by using the average grade obtained in the tasks completed during each of the four deliveries in which the activity was divided. Low-performing groups were defined by grades equal to or below 3.7 (Grades  $\leq 3.7$ ), whereas high-performing groups were associated with grades equal to or greater than 3.8 (Grades  $\geq 3.8$ ).

The following table shows the averages of the groups at the end of the completion of the collaborative task.

**Table 2.** *Averages Obtained by the Groups while Working in Groups.*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Average obtained while Performing the tasks</b>
L1G-	Average obtained 3.5
L2G-	Average obtained 3.4
H3G++	Average obtained 4.1
A4G+	Average obtained 3.8
H5G++	Average obtained 4.5

## **Observation Time for Groups**

The groups worked together during the first academic semester, spanning eight weeks, upon starting their postgraduate study. Meetings were scheduled every two weeks to discuss issues of their research proposal, guided by a thematic agenda provided by the professor. Observation was conducted on interaction episodes among participants, which were recorded via video before the analysis. The following shows the activities that were included in the observation.

### **Weeks One and Two.**

Students were required to work in groups and search for at least five research reports published within the last six months. This task was required to be completed by all members of the group. The expected output consisted of a concise report detailing the methodological trends, key findings, and most cited authors within the selected topics by each group. The delivery dynamics were designed on prior meetings, which were online synchronous sessions and each group member presented and discussed the articles they had researched. Groups were required to deliver a preliminary report post-discussion, detailing their collaborative work. This report could further be refined and approved by the professor of the research seminar. Furthermore, each group provided a link to their meeting recordings as evidence of their collaborative work.

### **Weeks Three and Four.**

The second delivery involved constructing a Vester matrix based on the previous literature review. This matrix significantly frames the problem statement for the presentation. The task to be delivered was their approach to the problem statement and its corresponding research question. For both delivery tasks, the group convened synchronous meetings to discuss the findings of Vester's matrix and how it contributed to the construction of a hierarchical problem statement.

Based on the literature review and Vester matrix analysis, the groups identified key aspects of the research problem and presented them in a five-page maximum report. Additionally, a link to the meeting recording was provided as evidence of the dynamics of the collaborative work.

### **Weeks Five and Six.**

During weeks five and six, the groups focused on formulating the objectives of their research proposal. During these weeks, emphasis was placed on analyzing coherence and cohesion. Groups were tasked with reviewing their research proposal objectives to ensure they were closely aligned with the topic, the problem statement, and the research question. Therefore, each group convened meetings to discuss the problem statement and the associated question. The purpose of these meetings was to formulate procedural goals aimed at addressing research issues. The discussion was video recorded, serving as evidence of the collaborative work.

### **Weeks Seven and Eight.**

During weeks seven and eight, particular emphasis was placed on writing the rationale. The final task was to perform a thorough evaluation to find problems in the coherence and logical flow of the study proposal. After this review, each group responded to five questions to facilitate the construction of the rationale. The questions posed were as follows: 1. What is the problem being investigated? 2. What is the emergence of the study problem? 3. How feasible is the conduct of the research? 4. Which segment of the population benefits from the study? and 5. What personal, professional, or disciplinary benefit will be obtained from the study and its potential replication?

Questions were debated among group members serving as input for drafting the rationale. The task to be delivered contained a preliminary refined research proposal, alongside the corresponding link to the synchronous session recording during the task execution.

## **Regarding Video Data**

Following the professor's instructions, each of the five groups recorded meetings every two weeks, resulting in a total of 20 recordings. Each group autonomously managed the duration of the recording and the dynamics of their interactions. The total recording time was 779 minutes and 18 seconds. Table 3 shows detailed recording times allocated by the groups across individual sessions, and the total amount of time obtained from recordings and collaborative work.

**Table 3.** *The Distribution of Partial and Total Times, along with the Number of Interaction Sessions Recorded by the Groups during the Execution of the Collaborative Work.*

Groups	First Session Weeks 1 and 2	Second Session Weeks 3 and 4	Third Session Weeks 5 and 6	Fourth Session Weeks 7 and 8	Total Duration of Group Task Execution	Total Sessions during Collaborative Work
L1G-	50:57	42:11	60:06	180:09	332:83	252
L2G-	21:13	11:12	12:58	13:18	58:01	195
H3G++	22:41	25:25	19:43	12:58	79:67	253
A4G+	45:04	41:39	17:27	11:46	115:16	139
H5G++	49:27	60:22	11:46	69:63	193:51	205

## Method of Analysis

Once all the transcripts of the videos were generated, they were categorized and converted into a code system. Interactions related to task regulation and communication were identified and characterized as illustrated in Figure 1. Interactions were identified through events and phases to establish a hierarchical order. Both the task regulation and communication were instrumental in delineating various levels of complexity during the phase and the number of recorded events. An “event” refers to the interaction occurring during a collaborative activity which serves to elucidate aspects of communication and tasks during its execution. These events can manifest as brief interaction episodes among group members (Liskala et al., 2011; Volet et al., 2009).

Table 4 illustrates task regulation and communication, along with the events selected for analysis. These are hierarchically categorized by phases with the first phase marking the beginning of collaborative group work, progressing to phase four, which embodies the ideal of collaborative work.



**Table 4.** *Phases and Events Encompassing Task Regulation and Communication.*

<b>Phases and Events Categorized by Level of Complexity</b>	<b>Eventos en la regulación de la tarea</b>	<b>Eventos en la regulación de la comunicación</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	Judgments regarding the task and comprehension of the task.	Group questioning.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Information Exchange and organization of information.	Adaptation and perception of the task.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Goal setting.	Negotiation of objectives.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Task Execution	Reflection on the execution of the task.

## Results

The following questions contributed to addressing the objective: Are there any discrepancies in time management between high- and low-performing groups during the execution of collaborative activities? Is there any indication of differences in the episodes of interaction regarding task regulation and communication recorded by high- and low-performing groups? The analysis of the relationship between the total time devoted to the execution of the group activity, and the total number of interactions recorded regarding task regulation and communication contributed to addressing both the objective and the questions. Subsequently, the frequency of interaction episodes recorded by the groups regarding task regulation and communication was analyzed. This analysis discerned differences among the interaction episodes related to task regulation and communication within the groups during the collaborative tasks.

### Total Amount of Time Dedicated to the Execution of the Collaborative Tasks

The interaction among the five groups during the execution of the tasks revealed that the first group (332 minutes and 83 seconds /237), the fifth group (190 minutes and 58 seconds/187), and the fourth group (115 minutes and 16 seconds /128) dedicated the greatest amount of time to executing the collaborative activity. Whereas the third group (79 minutes and 67 seconds /237) and the second group (58 minutes and 01 second /179) dedicated less time, registering a similar number of interaction episodes across all groups.

Table 5 illustrates the previous results.

**Table 5.** Relationship between the number of episodes and dedication time to the task within the groups.

	L1G-	L2G-	H3G++	A4G+	H5G++
Interaction Episodes	237	179	237	128	187
Total Time Dedicated to the Task	332:83	58:01	79:67	115:1	190:5

Results demonstrated distinct behaviors across groups. Dedication time between collaborative activity and number of interactions recorded among groups showed no significant differences except for with the second and third groups. These groups revealed a high number of interaction episodes about the total time dedicated to the collaborative activity.

However, worth noting is that the high-performing group displayed a high number of interaction episodes alongside a rational use of time. This provides an affirmative answer to one of the questions addressing differences in time management of time by high- and- low-performing groups during the execution of collaborative activities. Findings suggest high-performing groups exhibit superior planning and time management skills in executing collaborative tasks. This means both efficient time allocation management and an adequate working environment. Additionally, suitable dynamics of communication and task management facilitate quality interaction episodes associated with setting goals.

## Identification of Episodes Involving Regulation of Communication

During the eight weeks of the collaborative activity, a total of 367 episodes of interaction were observed: 79 episodes of interaction in the first group (L1G-), 72 in the second group (L2G-), 92 in the third group (H3G++), 42 in the fourth group (A4G+) and 82 in the fifth group (H5G++).

Table 6 illustrates these results.

**Table 6.** *Frequency of Interaction Episodes Involving an Event of Regulation of Communication.*

Events Involving the Regulation of Communication	L1G-	L2G-	H3G++	A4G+	H5G++
Group Questioning	12	14	6	10	8
Negotiation of Objectives	39	24	30	18	27
Adaptation and Perception of the Task	14	23	16	11	11
Reflection on the Execution of the Task	14	11	40	3	36
<b>Total</b>	79	72	92	42	82

Results showed a significantly higher number of interaction episodes in the objective negotiation event across groups. Additionally, high-performing groups exhibited a significant result in the reflection on the execution of the task. This suggests a metacognitive process within these groups.

The interaction dynamics of the negotiation of objectives were evidenced through the following expressions:

Well, we all have agreed on why our project is named: Influence of Didactic Resources and the learning environment of primary school children in the rural and urban area of San Pedro [...] Could you please confirm if you agree? (Personal Communication, 05 May, 2022, own translation).

The aforementioned fragment evidences effective communication among group members and collective decision-making.

The following fragment asserts effective interaction on how groups negotiated their objectives through successful communication as illustrated below:

It appears imperative to establish uniform criteria for our report preparation. [...] I think it is crucial to retain the section we worked on based on the colors assigned by the professor for consulting databases as it holds significance. (Personal Communication, April 11, 2022, own translation).

Regarding high-performing groups, results revealed a considerable number of episodes characterized by high interaction in goal setting as evidenced in the subsequent interaction fragments:

We had already discussed it in a previous meeting. We have already talked about that. So, to delimit the topic, we will focus on the creation of the manual that we have in mind. Emphasis will be on that because students with needs are many, right? [...] This includes everything that has to do with disability, everything that has to do with emotions, with diversity. [...] So let's just focus on that. We've already talked about it this week. (Personal Communication, May 5, 2022, own translation).

Another fragment evidencing the adaptation and goal setting pertains to the high-performing groups during the negotiation of objectives for subsequent collaborative planning together on the same task. As shown in the fragment below:

Well, the truth is that it doesn't catch my attention. Talking about needs and as I say, it is listening to the titles to choose between the two [...] I liked that about the inclusive perspective because it goes beyond creating an operational manual from an inclusive viewpoint at school care [...] the other title is insufficient, the one about an inclusive look from an operative and didactic manual in basic and middle preschool educational care and the last one that is very similar [...] An inclusive view in the light of education from a didactic perspective at primary and secondary preschool levels. [...] But remember that we had talked like that word - light - doesn't fit. (Personal Communication, May 5, 2022, own translation).

## Identification of Episodes Involving the Task Regulation

During the eight weeks of the collaborative activity involving task regulation, results displayed a total of 601 episodes of interaction: 158 episodes of interaction in the first group (L1G-), 107 in the second group (L2G-), 145 in the third group

(H3G++), 86 in the fourth group (A4G+), and 105 in the fifth group (H5G++). Based on the findings, all five groups exhibited episodes of interaction with a notable prevalence observed in the events of understanding the task and organizing the information. The high-performing groups stood out as the groups demonstrated a concentration of interaction episodes evident in goal setting and execution of the task. Table 7 illustrates these results.

**Table 7.** *Frequency of Interaction Episodes Involving a Task Regulation Event.*

<b>Social Task Regulation</b>	<b>L1G-</b>	<b>L2G-</b>	<b>H3G++</b>	<b>A4G+</b>	<b>H5G++</b>
<b>Judgments about the task</b>	65	17	12	18	3
<b>Comprehension of the task</b>	20	26	24	16	7
<b>Information Exchange</b>	18	15	12	7	18
<b>Organization of the information</b>	27	19	35	24	17
<b>Setting Goals</b>	17	13	39	13	32
<b>Execution of Tasks</b>	11	17	23	8	28
<b>Total</b>	158	107	145	86	105

The findings regarding task regulation and recurrent interaction episodes among the high-performing groups during the events of goal setting and execution of the task coincide with Pintrich's (2000) proposal that the initial phases of the regulation of learning manifest in students' forward anticipation. This fact is elucidated through actions linked to the planning and execution of academic activities, forming the core of monitoring that aids students or groups in goal setting. Similarly, the recurrence in aspects associated with comprehension, organization of information, and planning aligns with Zimmerman's (2000) proposal of the forecasting phase in his learning regulation model. This phase encompasses the interaction between task analysis, goal setting, and strategy planning.

Goal setting, the execution of the task, the negotiation of objectives, and the reflection on the task executed are pivotal events that contribute to elucidating authentic processes of social regulation and collaboration. Therefore, based

on the inquiry of this study, which aimed to discern differences in interaction episodes related to task regulation and communication between high- and low-performing groups, the findings indicate a notable presence of interaction episodes, particularly prevalent among the high-performing groups. These results suggest that within a collaborative framework framed by social task regulation and communication, there should be an emphasis on quality episodes concerning goal setting, task execution, objective negotiation, and task reflection. These aspects appear to be recurring predominantly in groups exhibiting above-average performance conditions.

## Discussion

The findings align with those documented by Rogat and Linnenbrink (2011), who observed in their study that the presence of listening elements, negotiation of viewpoints, and the willingness to generate and adapt shared goals are linked to communicative-level regulation processes among group members. These processes are conducive to, or positively impact, the execution of collaborative activities.

The findings are consistent with those reported by Rogat and Linnenbrink (2011), who noted in their study that the presence of elements such as active listening, negotiation of perspectives, *and* readiness to formulate and adjust shared goals are interconnected with communicative-level regulation processes among group members. These processes contribute to or have a positive effect on, the execution of collaborative activities. The aforementioned is directly associated with the group members' adeptness for discussing and negotiating their respective viewpoints and objectives during the execution of the task. Such engagement facilitates the adaptation of goals together to execute the task.

These findings regarding the prevalence of the communicative interaction of negotiation of objectives and adaptation of goals across groups working together are consistent with Isohätälä et al. (2017). They stated that the processes of social regulation, interaction, and participation reveal the level of involvement of groups during a collaborative task execution. This is exemplified by the advantages derived from mutually solving challenges within the group, and agreeing on various activities to effectively execute the collaborative task. These aspects were particularly observed among high-performing groups, as indicated by their average scores throughout the collaborative activity.

These findings corroborate Saab et al.'s (2007) assertion that positive interaction among group members is paramount in the organization, negotiation, and adaptation of goals during collaborative processes. This underscores the

significance of effective communication processes within the dynamics of collaborative execution of tasks.

According to Perera et al. (2009), task regulation involves comprehending the conditions that prompt a group to recognize the primary demands of a task, thus facilitating subsequent planning, execution, and collective reflection upon its completion.

Janssen et al. (2012) and Hadwin et al. (2017) posit that in social task regulation, group members can use mechanisms and strategies that aid them in defining various aspects of the task. This includes collaborative objectives and goal setting. High-performing groups demonstrated such aspects.

The findings of the present study align with those of Janssen et al. (2012), which suggest that collaborative goal setting and evaluation monitoring play a crucial role in task regulation. Specifically, these enhance students' collective perception of the execution of tasks and the overall performance perceived by the group.

These findings results are consistent with those of Soboncinski et al. (2021), who demonstrated that the groups exercising surveillance over their tasks exhibit greater comprehension in both the thematic and operational dimensions of the tasks. Goal setting and task execution demonstrate the above-mentioned.

Additionally, consistent with the findings of Hadwin et al. (2017), the comprehension of the task, the organization of information, and the goal setting within group interactions during the execution of a collaborative task significantly influence how students use their resources. This can result in either the establishment of distinct scaffolding mechanisms or, in the absence thereof, the gradual dissipation of a cohesive group strategy. Low-performing groups serve as an example, as they exhibited a recurrent pattern in interaction episodes related to judgments about the task, comprehension, or organization of information without delving into further analysis.

Similarly, Isohätälä et al. (2017) argue that learning processes characterized by social regulation, specifically interactions involving the negotiation of objectives by aligning perceptions regarding collaborative processes, appear to shape the group's development of strategies associated with the tasks, goal setting, and adaptation. This study's findings confirm prior observations regarding the presence of aspects related to the phases of task compression, information organization, and goal setting within group dynamics. High-performing groups consistently exhibit these aspects across a substantial number of interaction episodes; whereas low-performing groups demonstrate the opposite trend.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study facilitated the identification of disparities in interaction episodes related to time management, task regulation, and communication between low- and high-performing groups. Similarly, the study enabled a deeper understanding of which aspects hold greater significance or are more prevalent in interaction episodes; both within low- and high-performing groups during collaborative activities.

On the one hand, within group dynamics, general or similar aspects tend to predominate among groups regardless of their performance level during collaborative tasks. These aspects on which the groups seem to concur include: posing questions to the group, comprehending the task, and organizing information. While the findings revealed the recurrence of these events across all groups, it does not inherently imply a strictly collaborative or socially regulated trait. As demonstrated, other recurring events must occur within the collaborative process's greater complexity, such as negotiating objectives, goal setting, executing tasks, and reflecting on task performance. Such aspects appear to have or be prevalent in high-performing groups.

On the other hand, the study revealed specific types of events, particularly related to task regulation and communication that seem to contribute significantly to fostering a collaborative and socially regulated group dynamic. This, in turn, suggests that through the prevalence of these aspects in group interaction, collaborative production within a work group could be enhanced and considered more effectively.

As a pedagogical aspect, the study demonstrated a targeted approach to identifying collaborative and social regulation traits within work groups, focusing on analyzing task regulation and communication. Furthermore, through a suggested hierarchical organization, it provided insights into how these events constitute phases and sub-events, aiding in a deeper understanding of the collaborative process. This approach enables the identification of collaborative and socially regulated traits within groups more efficiently, facilitating the differentiation between high- and low-performing groups in executing joint tasks. Finally, as a central feature, the study was able to ascertain which aspects of social task regulation and communication are directly linked to the collaborative execution of tasks.



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# Creative Writing as a Form of Psychosocial Mediation: A Bet from the Sociocultural Vision of Human Cognition\*

[English Version]

La escritura creativa como forma de mediación psicosocial: una apuesta desde la visión sociocultural de la cognición humana

Escrita criativa como uma forma de mediação psicossocial: um compromisso a partir de uma visão sociocultural da cognição humana

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To recognize creative writing as a tool for psychosocial mediation and as a space to enhance cognitive skills; through which the realities experienced by young people are interpreted through the stories created in the writing workshop oriented within the framework of the project "Weaving political capacities for transitions in territories, in Ovejas, Sucre". **Methodology:** The realities co-constructed by young people during the sessions of the creative writing workshop are made visible, which involved the participation of seven young people belonging to the Youth Corporation Promoting Peace (CORJUP), which operates in the village of Villa del Carmen and in the urban area of Ovejas. The postulates of phenomenology proposed by the author Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paulo Freire's popular education, are taken as reference for the work developed with young people. **Results:** First, the territorial altar constituted a device for creativity; second, metaphor appears as a way to narrate the unnamable aspects of young people's realities; third, the workshop is configured as a possibility for psychosocial mediation; and fourth, it is evident that the gathering allows young people to strengthen cognitive skills that enable them to appropriate the constructed knowledge and recognize its importance for transforming the lived reality. **Conclusions:** Creative writing seeks to be a sort of stage for transforming the very present that communities inhabit. It is assumed as a space to promote the cognitive resources that make social interaction possible, it is configured as the visionary power to find in the gathering a possibility to transcend conflicts. It also acknowledges that writing shows, elaborates, and transcends the capacity to mediate between individual reality and sociocultural practices.

**Key words:** Creative writing; mediation; cognition; youth; peace (obtained from the UNESCO thesaurus).

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## Resumen

**Objetivo:** reconocer la escritura creativa como una herramienta de mediación psicosocial, y como un espacio para potenciar las habilidades cognitivas; desde las cuales se interpretan las realidades vividas por los jóvenes a través de los relatos creados en el taller de escritura orientado en el marco del proyecto «Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios, en Ovejas, Sucre». **Metodología:** se visibilizan las realidades co-construidas por los jóvenes durante las sesiones del taller de escritura creativa, que contó con la participación de siete jóvenes pertenecientes a la Corporación Juvenil Promoviendo Paz (CORJUP), la cual tiene su campo de acción en la vereda Villa del Carmen y en el casco urbano de Ovejas. Se toman como referencia los postulados de la fenomenología propuesta por el autor Maurice Merleau-Ponty, y la educación popular de Paulo Freire, como fundamento para el trabajo desarrollado con los jóvenes. **Resultados:** primero, el altar territorial constituyó un dispositivo para la creatividad; segundo, la metáfora aparece como forma de narrar lo innombrable de las realidades de los jóvenes; tercero, el taller se configura como una posibilidad de mediación psicosocial; y, cuarto, se evidencia que la juntanza posibilita a los y las jóvenes fortalecer habilidades cognitivas que permiten apropiarse del conocimiento construido, y reconocer la importancia de este para transformar la realidad vivida. **Conclusiones:** la escritura creativa procura ser una suerte de escenario para transformar el presente mismo que habitan las comunidades. Se asume como espacio para impulsar los recursos cognitivos que hacen posible la interacción social, se configura como la potencia vidente de encontrar en la juntanza una posibilidad para trascender los conflictos. Reconoce, además, que la escritura muestra, elabora y trasciende la capacidad de mediar entre la realidad individual y las prácticas socioculturales.

**Palabras clave:** escritura creativa; mediación; cognición; juventud; paz (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** reconhecer a escrita criativa como uma ferramenta de mediação psicossocial e como um espaço para aprimorar as habilidades cognitivas, a partir das quais interpretar as realidades vividas pelos jovens por meio das histórias criadas na oficina de escrita realizada como parte do projeto «Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios, en Ovejas, Sucre». **Metodologia:** as realidades construídas pelos jovens durante as sessões da oficina de escrita criativa são tornadas visíveis, com a

participação de sete jovens pertencentes à Corporación Juvenil Promoviendo Paz (CORJUP), cujo campo de ação abrange a vila de Villa del Carmen e a área urbana de Ovejas. Os postulados da fenomenologia proposta pelo autor Maurice Merleau-Ponty e a educação popular de Paulo Freire foram tomados como referência para o trabalho desenvolvido com os jovens. **Resultados:** em primeiro lugar, o altar territorial se constituiu em um dispositivo para a criatividade. Em segundo lugar, a metáfora aparece como uma forma de narrar o inominável nas realidades dos jovens. Em terceiro lugar, a oficina se configura como uma possibilidade de mediação psicossocial. E, em quarto lugar, fica evidente que o encontro possibilita aos jovens o fortalecimento de habilidades cognitivas que lhes permitem se apropriar do conhecimento construído e reconhecer sua importância na transformação da realidade vivida. **Conclusões:** a escrita criativa busca ser uma espécie de cenário para transformar o próprio presente que as comunidades habitam. Ela é assumida como um espaço para promover os recursos cognitivos que possibilitam a interação social, configurando-se como o poder vidente de encontrar no encontro uma possibilidade de transcender os conflitos. Também reconhece que a escrita mostra, elabora e transcende a capacidade de mediação entre a realidade individual e as práticas socioculturais.

**Palavras-chaves:** escrita criativa; mediação; cognição; juventude; paz (extraído do dicionário de sinônimos da UNESCO).

## Weaving the Word in Rural Colombia

From the scenarios of political transition in which Colombia finds itself, since the signing of the peace agreements in 2016, it is necessary to recognize not only the effects derived from the armed conflict, but also the mediation processes that have emerged in the territory, for this specific case, from the young people and their creative writing processes. That is the central issue that will be addressed in this paper, which arises from the research process developed in the heart of the Montes de María, specifically in Ovejas, Sucre, from the project "Spinning political capacities for transitions in the territories".

Ovejas is a municipality where the mountains cross the skies and settle poetically in the minds of those who observe a foggy sunrise that covers the town. The red sunset fills with hope because the night is coming to refresh the atmosphere and give air to the bodies. Its population is 23,436 inhabitants (Municipal Mayor's Office, 2020), of which a total of 18,507 people have been



officially recognized as victims of the armed conflict (UARIV, 2021). This data speaks for itself, it accounts for the high level of affectation that this region has suffered, the largest of which is forced displacement. However, it is a municipality where its people, despite the difficulties, have found ways to get up and move forward through various mediation alternatives.

Ovejas is a municipality that smells of tobacco and sesame, two renowned crops that have also long supported families. Products such as yams, cassava, green beans, eggplant, pumpkin, watermelon, sweet pepper, chili peppers, and honey from bees, which are sown and cultivated in the mountains of its 11 districts, 23 villages, and 14 hamlets with the blessing of peasant's hands, also adorn the streets (Municipal Mayor's Office, 2020).

Flor del Monte, Chengue, Don Gabriel, Almagra, San Rafael, Canutal, La Peña, and Canutalito are some rural settlements with challenging access roads that have allowed access to understand the resistance and ways to resurface after violence. In the municipality of Ovejas, this has been present since the 1930s, when the unions resorted to weapons (Aguilera, 2013); later, in the 1940s, violence between political parties also occurred, and in the 1960s, with the struggle of the National Association of Peasant Users -ANUC (Méndez, 2017). Finally, in the 90s, violence reached its peak in Colombia, and for this area, a continuous struggle for the territory and a greater incidence between 1990 and 2005. While the population is currently in the process of transitioning towards peace, it is no secret that situations of violence persist in the area. Some residents even indicate that "[...] in the Montes de María, we have not yet lived through the post-conflict" (personal conversation with a land claimant leader, 2021).

Some of the main armed groups present in the early stages of the violence in the municipality of Ovejas were the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), the Free Homeland Movement (MPL), and the Socialist Renewal Current (CRS). After the 1990s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (FARC-EP), the National Liberation Army (ELN), the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) Heroes Block of the Montes de María, and, more recently, the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC). As a result of the actions of these groups, there were multiple affectations in the municipality that left, among the main victimizing events, forced displacement, massacres, forced disappearance, land dispossession and child recruitment.

Additionally, in periods of greater violence, it was very typical for the Ovejera community to be excluded or singled out by other regions, as expressed by an older woman, "[...] At that time, we were called guerrillas. If you were riding in a taxi and asked where you were from, you wouldn't dare say Ovejas because they called us guerrillas." (personal conversation, 73-year-old sheepwoman, 2022,

own translation). The growing outbursts of violence in the territory made the Montes de María a vulnerable area.

Based on all the problems caused by violence, the Program for the reconstruction of the social fabric in post-conflict zones in Colombia and, specifically, the project *Spinning political capacities for transitions in the territories between 2019 and 2022*. This aims to "Develop political capacities for transitions in the territories, based on democratic mediations of social conflicts, focused on reconciliation and the construction of stable and lasting peace" (Sánchez-Jiménez et al., 2021). Through this project, scenarios of community participation emerged to reconstruct the social fabric, which linked various actors, including women, social groups, productive organizations, and young people. With this last group, spaces were sought that shed light on the need to spread the word, weave knowledge, and perceive the world beyond the reality that many were accustomed to living.

The intention to portray through writing what happened in the territory arises from the participant's observation of an anthropologist who, through popular, street, and mountain literature, begins to weave spaces for feedback from the creative writing workshop in *Maniguaje*. It advances a process of recognition of the different ways of living and recreating reality, understanding that "[...] Writing as a form of representation of the universe is capable of being interpreted by and from infinite ways of seeing" (Cobaleda & Agudelo 2017). This also implies that through the writing of popular and academic realities, the written experience is configured as an exploration that also implies "[...] interrelating and combining the verbal with the visual and auditory" (Cobaleda & Agudelo, 2017). Mediation scenarios are then proposed for peacebuilding, where writing as a tool and space for interaction allows territories to transform their present reality.

Relevant elements of popular education proposed by Paulo Freire were used as references to conceptually base the process; others related to the phenomenology of perception postulated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Finally, autoethnography was used to prepare this article, as regards the articulation of the narrative from the researcher as author.

From Freire's approaches, his postulates of an education that values the lived experience of the actors are relevant. Its forms of identification with community and popular interests and values, from which the world is read, are not always perceived, and studied in the dominant model of banking education (Freire, 2004, p. 48). The emancipatory interest of creative writing can be understood as addressing the reasons for conflict and the possibilities of developing collective activities, which are not only responses to violence but can be ways to overcome those circumstances of violation.

Now, as for Merleau-Ponty, the connections that are established between the sense of experience as a situated perception of a consciousness that is, at the same time, a body to a region is resumed, with a sketch of the world that is accessed through gesture, from the singularity of what is lived. In the words of Merleau-Ponty (1985):

I understand others through my body, as it is through my body that I perceive "things." The meaning of the gesture, thus "understood," is not behind it; it is confused with the structure of the world that the gesture designs and that I take on my own; it is exhibited on the same gesture. (p. 203).

From the presence of the body as a gesture, the significance of being in the world is only understandable because there are tacit, previous elements to which consciousness is related. It assumes them with a projection of universality shareable with others through bodily perception and through attempts to embody them in language as a linguistic gesture. In this way, the conception of the world is not an event founded by isolated consciousness, but an expansion of experience that becomes correlative to the threads with which common language manages to make it transmissible. The concreteness of the phenomenon of communication through the linguistic gesture makes it possible at the same time, on the one hand, that the discourse does not translate "[...]" in which it speaks, a thought already done, but consumes it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1985, p. 195), so that the senses of the speaking word and the spoken word can be differentiated; and, on the other hand, for those who understand the discourse, it happens that we have the power to understand beyond what we spontaneously think.

Therefore, being in the world allows us to know the gestural significance immanent in words and to recognize that "[...]" the word is in a certain place in my linguistic world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1985, p. 197). If we exist as a possible perceiving consciousness, as mentioned, we are so to the extent that we have a standard body, gestures, and language that constitute us. At the same time, we update them by the very fact of discovering ourselves as part of the world of things but open to the exploration beyond its finitude and in the projection of the mystery of the body that transcends it.

The incorporation of the conceptual references related to autoethnography is due to the relational commitment that positions the narrator as a participant in a situation and a social environment. There, the researcher is perceived and interacts through discursive actions that constitute her role as the facilitator of a pedagogical strategy that simultaneously serves as a setting for the encounter with young people who are the protagonists of new searches and trajectories. As noted, the three conceptual references converge in terms of the social character

from which the discursive actions are conceived and the possibilities of producing meaning for the agents. Not from the development of individual psychological skills but from the broader horizon of higher psychological capacities derived from participation in the various everyday social practices that people develop.

## Methodology

### Popular Narrative: Deep Voice as Territorial Chanting

I like peace processes; for me, peace is like the bird that sings in the morning: resplendent and fresh. It is like the sunrise after the rain. It is like the smell of wet soil or like the smell of mom's food. It is that hug that makes you think that everything will be fine. (Arlenis Genis, young man belonging to CORJUP, 2022).

Approaching rural communities, where people's needs are perceived as far away, is a kind of resistance space in which the risk of speaking other languages is taken. Through Participatory Action Research (IAP), it was possible to listen to the deep voice of the reality brewing from the collective resonances, which have expanded over the years. Young people are that portion of the population between the ages of 17 and 24 who are finding their identity through interaction with others. Youth is to have the possibility of opening their minds to new ways of conceiving the world, using everyday spaces to build scenarios that move towards peace. This was the population participating in the creative writing workshop, from which the development of this writing emerged. The group with which the workshop is carried out, rather than having been chosen under comparable selection criteria, was consolidated by affinity and taste for writing; its particularity is that in their free time, they work on sweet pepper, yam, and other crops in family plots. However, in their youthful life and leadership, they have found the power to unite, not to stop creating ways that lead them to think about the territory.

On the one hand, there are some first-semester students of Philosophy and Business Administration, a young woman who likes crafts and jewelry; on the other hand, there are young people who are just graduating from school, and, like a seed, there is a 12-year-old boy who takes part in the workshops and who begins to learn how a social or youth organization can be achieved. As a particularity evident in the group, there is the desire to express, be able to talk, and recognize that their community space and the region where they live, Montes

de María, are more than war and fateful stories, as evidenced by the media. There is a fondness for ancestral identity and self-expression, discovering that many actions can be transformative; in this case, writing can transform individual and collective realities.

These young people's stage of action is the village of Villa del Carmen, better known in the municipality of Ovejas as «La Santa». We find the need of young people to narrate their territory to recognize that they are interested in artistic environments, such as the ability to externalize sensations and experiences. This led to the creation of the pedagogical strategy "Creative Writing Workshop", which is the main instrument for consolidating information. It all started in the Youth CORJUP (Youth Corporation Promoting Peace) group that emerged in 2021. Additionally, because they belong to the Ecumenical Network of Women for Peace (REMPAZ), the young people decided to form an alternative and inclusive project that would allow them to work for the shepherd youth. For them, it was important to find a space where they could express themselves and be independent of any political or organizational flag since, as some say, "[...] we had already been working a lot, but we did not find reasons to continue; sometimes the leaderships are not clear or good" (Youth of CORJUP, 2022).

After listening to the reasons and finally observing the shortcomings and limitations in the territory, the workshop was installed in February 2022 to unleash the creativity of young people. The main objective is to foster, through writing, narrative spaces for literary creation around the peasant and individual memory of the territory. In a context of silence, where many things are not told, speaking perhaps has been denied because only the elderly are heard, and silencing youth and childhood has been part of the "urbanity of Carreño". It is essential to recognize that, given young people's absent oral capacity, this proposal sets a precedent for written and oral expression. While writing creatively gives rise to reflection and inner experience, it is important to develop the power of language to read what is written and to share. For the young people of CORJUP, it becomes important to co-create and be part of the planning of activities; there, they found the Sunday meeting the power to redefine the role of social projects in the territory.

In addition to the above, inclusive activities need to be co-constructed and designed from the territorial symbols present in the territorial altar. Space was designed with objects for the recognition of the territory and observations of practices, which allowed observing and recognizing knowledge and trades such as weaving hats, chairs, and backpacks; the preparation of typical dishes such as the mote de queso, eggplant salad, bean rice, and chili pea; products cultivated in the region such as honey from bees, tobacco, garlic, sweet chili, avocado, yam, sesame; among other foods and objects that are of importance in the construction

of collective and symbolic representations for the inhabitants of the municipality of Ovejas.

The path of writing and understanding their environment was just beginning. All roads led to Ovejas, like the land that forged their peasant spirits and identities. "[...] if you ask me, I am a peasant. I do not deny it. I feel part of my tradition" (Youth of CORJUP, 2022, own translation). With this expression, the work began. Thinking about the power of the symbols that appear on the territorial altar, each one chooses their food or object, giving it an origin and some characteristics (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Illustration inspired by the territorial altar.

Source: prepared by José Aníbal Rivero Salcedo for the Booklet "Popular Narratives for Peacebuilding," 2022.

Subsequently, and with the creation of characters, it is invited to know what a story is, to socialize some that allow working on famous and peasant narration, and the inner voice as a possibility of healing. For example, to address the recognition of the territory and the popular voice, it was proposed that the story "The Arrows" by David Sánchez Juliao be read. The reading inspired the young people to let their voices come to the surface; popular expressions like *no joda'*, *erda*, *mondá*, *«pelao*, *ven te echo un cuento»*, among others, arose to generate

a more pleasant dialogue in which they had no prejudices about expressing their feelings and internalizing who they were and what we were. «Costeñol», a term that identifies the way of speaking and expressing oneself in the communities located on the Atlantic coast of Colombia (and which the Caro y Cuervo Institute recognizes as a dialect that corresponds to a variation of Spanish in the Colombian Caribbean) some words denote a meaning in this particular context, and are used with an innate ability to transmit an identity characteristic or, as pointed out in the work carried out by De la Ossa and De la Ossa (2021), "[...] a '*sentipensante*' dialect, that is, the 'costeño' speaks feeling and feels speaking; hence it's linguistic and bodily expressions that escape the understanding of those who do not have Caribbean roots" (p. 25).

Thus, through the language and its dialect, Costeñol, young people had more confidence in those who guided the process, not because we were the «*señores*» (Name given to teachers in the municipality), but because it implied making known our practices and our ways of speaking to name the world. Therefore, the capacity of writing as a mediator from various socio-cultural and psychosocial aspects was evident since the dialogue from the territorial perspective began to grow. The young people enunciated their practices, and each time, it was more fun for them to write, share, and resignify what their characters were narrating, in addition to the meanings they discovered in their narratives. While this happened, the researcher's body was charged with meaning, words, and actions typical of the inhabited environment. Here, autoethnography makes sense as a space for dialogue with the community, as the power to bring universities and academia closer to community scenarios, understanding that reality from the researcher as a body that interacts. Thus, "[...] the body is a sort of expressive space that intertwines with other human bodies, with the living and with other things, which ultimately corresponds to the world itself" (Ferrada, 2019, p. 161, own translation).

In this sense, joint work with young people increasingly involved intertwining individual thoughts with collective ones; thus, writing was taking shape. In this way, creative writing and research were woven around autoethnography as a power to glimpse and allow for an expanded "[...] conception to accommodate both personal and/or autobiographical narratives, as well as the experiences of the ethnographer as a researcher - whether separately or combined - situated in a social and cultural context" (Blanco, 2012, p. 55, own translation).

In addition to this latent need to understand the world of young people, beyond just carrying out actions from scriptural encounters, it is preponderant to recognize the power of popular education in social fabric reconstruction contexts. This implies understanding that there is not only one reality in the world since there are many worlds, many lives, and many bodies. There are as many readings

of the context as bodies walking and living the heartbeat of their territory's identity. It makes sense that those who work in or have approached these contexts, to paraphrase Mejía (2014), are endowed with a critical education that can be implemented throughout society. An education that helps to understand that if we work hand in hand with communities from their "oppressed" realities and locations, a transformation of that location can be achieved to co-construct more just societies (Mejía, 2014, pp. 5-6).

At this point, the perspectives from social research and the researcher's position in the workshop strengthen with the exercises elaborated on during the practical, creative writing sessions. There is no premise to write, no writing savvy where the feedback that was co-constructed is judged; simply, as the writing styles were distinguished, some horizons were unfolded to achieve a narrative of their own, with an inner voice the size of the youthful realities of the participants.

As previously related, the construction of the emerging stories and popular narratives had each participant's stories as protagonists; in their individualities, they allowed themselves to express what they felt regarding the reality of the world, their world. So, sharing the experience was a significant constituted space within the community-academy relationship, which supported a learning scenario around the fact that "[...] it is the individual himself who generates and builds his learning" (Chapel, 2016, p. 52, own translation). In this sense, each participant in their creative writings learned to narrate and, finally, built their way of internalizing what their writings wanted to convey about their places of enunciation.

Recognizing the narratives of the context is necessary to contribute to the transmission of social and cultural knowledge in the territories. These, in turn, are constituted as scenarios of social interaction that lead to the exchange of thoughts, actions, and individual conditions to clarify the powers of bodies in constant interaction with others. "Visible and mobile, my body is situated among the things; it is one of them. It belongs to the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 17, own translation); it is at this point that the interrelation between phenomenology and autoethnography becomes meaningful. Therefore, the experience of others could not be narrated without linking the feeling and being of the researcher in the field, without glimpsing that individual writing triggers collective writings of common territories, conversations, and social constructions that become constituted cultural practices.

From what is proposed in this article, the human condition, by relating, exchanging thoughts, and co-constructing, implies that human cognition is not seen from the subjects' individuality but is naturally mediated by interaction with other individuals. That is where the power of coming together, collective creation, and famous and community education lie as transformative settings and



facilitators of narratives that enable socio-cultural exchange. Thus, it can be said that the psychic does not merely correspond to individuality; on the contrary, it could be argued that we recognize ourselves in "[...] a dialogical world that crosses the threshold of the subject as an individual being, insofar as its construction as a social being carries with it the identity of the collective, its actions and connected movements" (Sánchez-Jiménez et al., 2021, p. 97).

In addition to this and starting from the importance of creative writing as a space for exchange, interaction, and creation among young people, it is essential to express that writing as art allows individuals to mediate their internal and external, public, and private, community or family conflicts to solve any psychosocial damage that may emerge from some events. In the case of Ovejas, they are framed in the armed conflict as a scenario of territorial dispute and armed violence until now.

Writing heals, saves, transforms, transfers, and installs itself in the minds of those who practice it; it is not lucky for those who risk writing that they can transmit to rural communities the learning and explorations about writing they have acquired over time. This is the power, the gain, and the learning: to go beyond the reality already perceived, already built, and already planned for a subject, to get out of that mold of life where from the instituted forms one cannot do one thing or another. Expressing is thus here the power of writing as a psychosocial mediator, as mentioned by Sánchez-Jiménez et al. (2021)

[...] a relational world goes beyond the individual as a psychic being and is isolated from its interactive context. To say that someone or something acts from the psychosocial point of view is to speak of a construction of coordinated actions through which every creation, or the result of said creations, is responsible for the interacting parties. (p. 97, own translation).

This relationship between individuals and bodies recognized from a common history creates scenarios of exchange where they increasingly find meaning in resolving conflicts, making the territory's problems visible, and finding answers to some of the youth's unknowns.

## Results

### Creative Writing as a Mediator of Peace

Peace is transparent, it is not seen, but it exists.  
Peace tastes like water, "to nothing", but everyone likes it and it is vital.  
Peace is like a dog, if it is your inner peace, it is your best friend.  
Peace is like smoke, the one that comes from Mom's stove.  
Even if they are always the same ingredients, it gives things a special touch "similar to love." (Marlon Genis, young man belonging to CORJUP, 2022, own translation).

Multiple learnings arise from community life. Thinking about academia at the service of people has to do with the present educational resistance, from the places that it is up to researchers and professionals from various disciplines to investigate. Contrary to other ways of producing knowledge, this article emerges from the narratives created by the young participants of the creative writing workshop, nurtured among the mountains, and always interested in narrating the other ways of conceiving culture and its territory.

### **The Territorial Altar as a Device for Creativity**

The practices inherent in the identity of Ovejas played a fundamental role in designing the pedagogical strategy. In this sense, the workshop's execution was framed in the altar as a power of identity and community fabric, which manifests itself as a symbolic narrative to fill the sacredness of the territory with meaning through objects and representative and identifying foods of the place. From there, a narrative collage is crafted, which, in turn, is a "patchwork quilt"; fragments of identity are woven from the word to the writing. This allowed the participants whose identities have been embodied in this article to display their imaginations since it is considered essential to bring their essence and voice to their literary creations and thoughts. By bringing objects and food to life, describing rice as a "[...] blond-haired character [...] who likes to be in the countryside a lot, feels very comfortable there" (Marlon Genis), or talking about tobacco as a "[...] big, humble old man, well-presented as a politician in the campaign" (Brayan Palencia, own translation), important creative elements were involved, as expressed by Vygotsky (1990), "[...] imagination is always structured with elements taken from reality" [own translation]. Thus, we saw how young people's previous experiences, in relation to these elements of the territorial altar, made possible materials for their imagination and the display of scriptural skills that even they did not know.

Finally, a narrative collage was built that became part of the essence of the workshop since it is not only reached as a product of the pedagogical strategy

but also allows a retrospective of the altar in a creative narrative. The short film "The Unnamable: The Makeup of Reality" also comes from this collage. It was directed by Katherine Andrea Vidal Pino and presented at the Manizales International Film Festival in November 2022. This narrative collage highlights the individual stories of the participants in the workshop, where there are narratives such as Maxwell José Duque Escobar by Marlon Genis, Meanwhile in the Game by Arlenis Genis, Stories and Memories by Osnaider Ortega, The Burning Tobacco by Brayan Palencia Peña; White joy, by Dina Peña; and Maraca Maraquín Mercado, by Andrea Mercado.

In these stories, it was possible to show that creativity as an innate aspect of human beings stands out as a call to continue transforming the territory through art. In this regard, Vygotsky also proposed different ways of representing reality when reaching adolescence. Activities typical of childhood, such as play and drawing, migrate towards creative expressions such as writing and music, which are related to more subjective and personal experiences (Vygotsky, 1990) that also enhance the imaginative capacity. In the words of Limiñana (2008), "The richer man's experience, the greater the material his imagination will have" (p. 40, own translation).

These writings were authored by young men and women or *pelaos*, as they are usually called, triggered in the visibility of their perceptions regarding the reality of their territory; for example, in *Stories and Memories*, the author Osnaider Ortega shows his perception regarding how to name a group of bagpipers:

[...] By changing the subject and remembering Benvolio's old stories, he said he was part of a piping group called Los Desterrados, a group of veterans. While there, the old man told us that he had a beautiful maraca, and even the condemned man gave it a name: he called it *macaraquita*. Until now, they are inseparable; they are for each other (p. 18, own translation).

The importance of the territory and culture in the lives of the young people of Ovejas is evident, as they form the foundation of what they learn and how they acquire such knowledge. As Ocampo (2011) states, the study of the learning process should include the study of culture, the body, and emotions.

Finally, the creative writing workshop allowed the development of cognitive skills such as creativity, understanding, and expression and became a space for meeting, interaction, and motivation. Along the same lines, Tacca (2016) describes some approaches to how young people learn and concludes that learning is linked to the frequency of stimuli and emotions they experience. He argues that when

a class (or in this case, an encounter) is accompanied by positive emotions, it becomes a priority for young people, as indeed was the creative writing workshop.

## Metaphor as a Way of Narrating the Unnamable

The exiles are a way of mentioning how, in many contexts, the possibility of sowing the land was snatched away. In times of conflict, many moved from the vicissitudes suffered and were banished; there, immersed in writing, is the writer's interpretation of his environment and the stories he narrates. Other stories, like this one, show that we are talking about the time of the armed conflict; only for young people, it is more feasible to do it from a literary story, using metaphors, synonyms, alliterations, and other resources that possibly make the way of naming what they or their families lived less dense. In this regard, Zambrano et al. (2019) argues that "[...] creative imagination allows them to feel the "freedom" to alter everything that is already known and to enter a new context of many possibilities" (p. 70, own translation).

Thus, writing allowed young people to express themselves from their subjectivity, not only to address negative experiences but also to tell stories of hope. In the story *Meanwhile, in the game*, Arlenis Genis reveals that it is always possible to give second chances.

At the end of the story, I can tell you that Zoe can do great things and knows very well that she is made of body and soul, so she can know and give herself the opportunity to trust others. Zoe knows that she is a crybaby to show that there are good people, and she knows that she is almost scrawny and dwarfed to make it known that with those qualities, she can change the world.

In his language (*Costeñol*), he shows that it is possible to bring everyday life into the story, writing giving voice to his context. A space that conveys security and protects what the workshop intended, making visible the multiple ways of perceiving reality. Emotions occupied a main place in the workshop; allowing them to be expressed gave greater meaning to the young people's experiences, who found in it a space to feel understood and recognized. As Martínez and Vasco (2011) mention, "[...] by understanding feelings, better ethical and political principles can be formulated capable of reducing affliction and increasing the well-being of society" (p. 193, own translation)

In essence, this narrative gift allows us to observe that, although, in the beginning, none of their individual stories mentioned the time of dispossession, conflict, violence, and displacement that they lived in the Montes de María, these events were reflected in the memories of their families; the legacy of their ancestors impresses on them the need to show what happened. In such a way, it was found that metaphorical language served as a resource for expression, which also enhanced, as Valenciano (2019) mentioned, other skills such as motivation, creativity, and reflective thinking. In the fragment of the reader's guide that was co-constructed with the *pelaos*, they wanted to explain to whoever read some elements that are found throughout the story:

To camouflage (metaphorize) the period of the armed conflict in the Montes de María, it was decided that each game represents a way of responding to the victimizing events that occurred in the territory, which in the collage is represented as the elephant.

In this case, metaphor is more than a literary resource; as Pousa et al. mention, it becomes a bridge to what is meant. (2020) “[...] writing is, in turn, riddled with metaphors and images that disguise what is sometimes difficult to remember, say and feel” (p. 58, own translation). The foregoing refers and alludes to the following section:

And so Maxwell believed that all people were good, but when he grew up, he realized that was not true because neither cassava, yam, corn nor life grows under the shade of the elephant. That is why he defends agriculture like a fine hen that passes by, watching that the sparrow-hawk does not take her chickens (Marlon Genis, 2022, own translation).

### **Creative Writing as a Form of Psychosocial Mediation**

The creative process managed to give context to the story, setting the stage for the Montes de María. In the fragments created by the young people, it is possible to perceive that the psychosocial mediations created by individuals begin to become spaces for common encounter, where weaving is the key to recognizing the vitality of belonging to the same space, feeling part of the network of the world where every act associated with an individual touches an entire community; understanding the reality of those who have had to suffer other realities.

The written word became an element of psychosocial mediation, as mentioned by Pousa et al. (2020), “Words have the power to bring about change, change that happens when awareness of who we are and who others are is broadened” (p. 64, own translation). This was precisely what the participants could evidence: changes in their way of perceiving, narrating, and interacting in their present realities. Creative writing spaces became environments of self-knowledge and recognition of others.

As the collective writing narrates, "And yes, the shadow of the elephant grows when the evening falls, and with it, the earth darkens... but not hope!" The bodies do not cease to want to dress in another reality, to exclaim that it is possible to find other words, other lands, and other airs that renew the past and transform the future. In a context affected by violence, peacebuilding appears as a prevailing need, as expressed by the young people who participated in the creative writing workshop:

*Pelao 11:* Let history remain in history.

*Pelao 12:* And that history does not repeat itself.

*Pelao 13:* Interior cleaning to be able to clean the territory.

Traveler: What are you looking for?

Maxwell: Peace. (CORJUP et al., 2022).

Starting precisely from the needs of the context, peacebuilding is one of the first order. In this sense, emotions, and feelings around it emerged in the meetings; translating them into writing allowed us to corroborate that for young people peace is a daily decision. Understanding that every human decision is the product of both emotional mechanisms and cognitive processes, the young people expressed that they could define what actions to carry out and what not to avoid repeating the history of violence and bet on a future of peace. As Damasio (2005) puts it: “[...] emotions and feelings do not have a crystal ball to see the future. However, deployed in the proper context, they become harbingers of what may be good or bad in the near or distant future.” (p. 143, own translation).

"What would have happened if the violence had not reached Ovejas?" With this question, one of the young people highlights the vitality of writing: that space to extol the present, to turn one's eyes and mind to other realities, to understand that peace is in a mote of cheese, or the honey cultivated by the farmers of Chengue, and in the narratives of the farmers of Ovejas. It could not

be overlooked to recognize that it is possible to install a capacity, to recognize the innate knowledge of narrating through common languages, of knowing that it is possible to transform the past, the present, and the future. The creative writing workshop is then consolidated as a form of psychosocial mediation, enhancing the capacity.

[...] to build forms of transformation of conflicts, and they are possible when communities come together to find alternatives that generate life and new forms of language to relate to others and favor psychological, social, cultural, and political coexistence (Sánchez-Jiménez et al., 2021, p. 93, own translation).

## **The Power of Collaborative Writing**

*Juntanza* appears as a power to transform social reality. It was evident the possibility of weaving through language the realities of silence and institutional precariousness. It is possible to resist and let oneself be found by inspiration in the Ovejas-style breakfast with cassava and sesame seeds, or in lunch with eggplant salad and pumpkin rice, and what to say about a good meal of spicy turkey with cassava and yam! The mountain breath accompanies all this, the smell of wet earth, and the edge of the machete with which, in the sun and water, the parents and these "peelers" go to the mountain to look for that piece of sky that gives them the hope that a different future is possible. Creating that future in complicity with others was a possibility in the workshop. It became evident that creativity is not a solo task but a process that is socially distributed and participatory (Clapp, 2019).

Young people showed a deep interest in the social, political, cultural, and economic issues of their territory, so it is considered necessary, as raised by Espinel-Rubio and Feo-Ardila (2022), "[...] that adults and institutions recognize the agency capacity of young people in the region as transformers of their realities" (p. 64, own translation).

Intercultural dialogue is categorized under La Ceiba, the tree that, for eight months, received, listened to, and protected the bodies they wrote and narrated to build peace (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Members of the creative writing workshop under La Ceiba.

Source: Luisa Fernanda García Guzmán, 2022

Loaded with anecdotes, smiles, and recognition in others and with others, young people recognize that what has been called the social appropriation of knowledge does not result only from the idea of recognizing that there are institutions that arrive, intervene, and leave. Here, as one of the young people said while traveling to Manizales to present the short film, *The Unnamable: The Makeup of Reality*, "[...] with you we were able to do something, to travel, this is the beginning for many things" (Young personal conversation CORJUP, 2022, own translation). Appropriating their abilities is the capacity left, transited, and exposed; it becomes evident and leaves the clarity that other worlds already exist. In this sense, it can be said that the creative writing workshop constituted for the young people the opening to a journey in which not only the ultimate destination made sense but also the journey taken to reach it.



## Conclusions

Posing a question such as, "What would have happened if violence had not reached Ovejas?" from the perspective of the youthful body inheriting the spoken word that names the conflict can also be understood as the opening to a different horizon an option not previously mentioned; a spoken word that inaugurates another perspective, which bets that the future time could be thought of without the necessary mention of the terrifying past. Perhaps creative writing and words that name other optimistic realities can be opportunities for the youth body to value the quota of silence that the previous generation of inhabitants of the Montes de María paid because of violence. Then, that young body can face the needs of the future and the contradictions of trying to live in peace.

In this sense, a sociocultural dialogue around creative writing allows us to transcend stories and practices rooted in family traditions to lead them to narratives that can superimpose nearby realities, the other possible ways of inhabiting the world. Those phrases, situations, and practices that directly influence young people's individual actions are still implanted in their minds.

Therefore, socio-cultural practices invite us to reflect on the body as a system, not only biological but also cultural, that has developed ways of absorbing and internalizing the information, stories, or marks that have passed through the ancestors. They, who from their own lives, bodies, and spirits, occupied a place in the world that positions them as thinking beings, seers, creators, and narrators of their reality and territories. As mentioned in other sections, creative writing is a kind of lucky expression, a way for people to come together, cooperate, and transform themselves and their reality. It is not free for young people to try to transcend the discourse, silence, and self-absorption that result from practices prior to them and that, thanks to creative, artistic, and innovative spaces, position them as builders of their lives.

The creative writing workshop was then assumed to be a space for developing thought, a scenario of shared social learning. It is conducive to putting into practice and strengthening certain cognitive resources such as memory, attention, self-awareness, and problem-solving by enabling a place for creation and thus achieving what was thought impossible; as one of the participants put it, "[...] I never thought I could write", and the research team witnessed that it was able to do so. This was also a scenario for free expression, to say what you want to say and be what you want to be.

Likewise, the process of creative writing has allowed young people, in Arendt's words, a kind of birth, to emerge in the world, to feel recognized, and to be the main actors who assume themselves as part of the history and the present

they are building, not as mere spectators. This workshop has made it possible, as Carmona (2019) would say, for young people to position themselves politically in their community and their context, to assume and be assumed as cognitive subjects with the capacity for agency and with the possibility of contributing to the establishment of a new course of action in the reality of their territory.

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## Public Policies as Mechanisms for Peacebuilding in Territories \*

[English version]

Las políticas públicas como dispositivos para la construcción de paces en los territorios

Políticas públicas como dispositivos para a construção da paz nos territórios

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To strengthen political capacities for transitions in territories, based on democratic mediations of social conflicts, oriented towards reconciliation and the construction of stable and lasting peace. **Methodology:** The research was framed within the framework of Research-Action-Participation (IAP), which involved the design, formulation, implementation, and evaluation of processes articulated between communities, public and private institutions, and social organizations, mainly using qualitative methods. **Results:** This article explores public policies as an ambiguous field of a transdisciplinary nature, and then reviews their connections with concepts such as 'participation,' 'deliberative capacity,' and 'mediation,' assumed as central axes in the formation of public policies. Likewise, it delves into different notions of peace (paces, in a broad sense), which allows us to highlight how different epistemological and methodological conceptions in pacifism determine approaches and devices in social construction. Finally, it examines the links between public policies as devices (strategies) for social mediation, and peacebuilding as a route for the agency of multiple social processes. **Conclusions:** The central conclusion revolves around the assertion that public policies acquire a peaceful nature insofar as they involve non-violent forms of social interaction. With them, those involved seek to achieve the highest possible level of well-being based on the resources and contexts in which they find themselves.

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**Key words:** Public policies; participation; public deliberation; peace; pacifist mediations (obtained from UNESCO and OIT thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** gestar capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios, con base en mediaciones democráticas de los conflictos sociales, orientadas hacia la reconciliación y la construcción de paz estable y duradera. **Metodología:** la investigación se enmarcó en la Investigación-Acción-Participación (IAP), lo cual implicó el diseño, formulación, puesta en marcha y evaluación de procesos articulados entre comunidades, instituciones públicas y privadas, y organizaciones sociales, haciendo uso principalmente de métodos cualitativos. **Resultados:** en este artículo se indaga en las políticas públicas como un campo ambiguo de naturaleza transdisciplinar, para luego revisar sus conexiones con conceptos como 'participación', 'capacidad deliberativa' y 'mediación', asumidos como ejes centrales en la formación de políticas públicas. Asimismo, se profundiza en distintas nociones de paz (paces, en sentido amplio), lo cual permite poner en evidencia cómo distintas concepciones epistemológicas y metodológicas en el pacifismo determinan enfoques y dispositivos en la construcción social. Finalmente, se examinan los vínculos entre las políticas públicas como dispositivos (estrategias) para la mediación social, y la construcción de paz como ruta para el agenciamiento de múltiples procesos sociales. **Conclusiones:** la conclusión central gira alrededor de la afirmación según la cual, las políticas públicas adquieren una naturaleza pacífica en cuanto involucran formas de interacción social no violentas. Con ellas los involucrados buscan alcanzar el mayor nivel de bienestar posible en función de los recursos y contextos en los cuales se encuentran.

**Palabras clave:** Políticas públicas; participación; deliberación pública; paces; mediaciones pacifistas (obtenidos del tesoro UNESCO y OIT).



## Resumo

**Objetivo:** desenvolver capacidades políticas para transições nos territórios, com base em mediações democráticas de conflitos sociais, orientadas para a reconciliação e a construção de uma paz estável e duradoura. **Metodologia:** a pesquisa foi enquadrada na estrutura da Pesquisa-Ação Participativa (PAR), o que implicou o projeto, a formulação, a implementação e a avaliação de processos articulados entre comunidades, instituições públicas e privadas e organizações sociais. Foi empregado principalmente métodos qualitativos. **Resultados:** este artigo investiga a política pública como um campo ambíguo de natureza transdisciplinar e, em seguida, analisa suas conexões com conceitos como "participação", "capacidade deliberativa" e "mediação", os quais são considerados como eixos centrais na formação da política pública. Além disso, explora diferentes concepções de paz (pazes, em um sentido amplo), permitindo destacar como diferentes abordagens epistemológicas e metodológicas do pacifismo influenciam as estratégias e dispositivos na construção social. Por fim, examina os vínculos entre políticas públicas como dispositivos (estratégias) de mediação social e a construção da paz como um caminho para a agência de múltiplos processos sociais. **Conclusões:** a conclusão central gira em torno da afirmação de que as políticas públicas adquirem uma natureza pacífica na medida em que envolvem formas não violentas de interação social. Por meio delas, os envolvidos buscam alcançar o mais alto nível possível de bem-estar, levando em consideração os recursos e os contextos em que se encontram.

**Palavras chave:** política pública; participação; deliberação pública; pacificação; mediações de paz (obtidas do tesouro UNESCO e OIT).

## Introduction

This article is the result of a systematic process of literature review, as well as theoretical and methodological reflections from a research group and social agency group within the framework of the project «*Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios*» (Spinning political capacities for transitions in the territories). The aim was to generate political capacity for transitions in the territories based on democratic mediation of social conflicts towards the stable building and lasting peace. Thus, the project leads to:

[...] subjects acknowledging, on the one hand, their conflicting realities that were attempted to resolve by armed violence and the damage it caused, and on the other hand, the realities of resistance, strategies of healing and mutual care, and the organizations and creations that enabled them to survive and persist as individuals, families, communities, and institutions. (Sánchez-Jiménez et al., 2022, p. 49, own translation).

Project actions are carried out in areas affected by the recent armed conflict in Colombia: The departments and municipalities of Caldas (Samaná and Riosucio); Sucre (Chalán and Ovejas), and Chocó (Riosucio and Bojayá). According to the methodology, this study is framed in the Participation Action Research (PAR) framework that demands to design, formulate, implement and evaluate articulated processes between communities, public and private institutions, and social organizations by qualitative methods, as a contribution to the collective construction of stable building and lasting peace in the territories. RAP demands:

[...] a political commitment to the territory, to the community, and to ourselves; at the same time, it invites us to dialogue and foster democratic practices that strengthen networking, consolidation of identities, and collective work towards peacebuilding. (Sánchez-Jiménez et al., 2022, p. 140, own translation).

The project «*Hilando capacidades políticas*» proposes two main routes for research and social agencement: 1) to recognize the damage of armed conflict by more than 50 years, the capacity of individuals, institutions and communities to survive, resist and innovate socially towards the transition to non-violent forms. 2) to strengthen the political capacities of organizations, support public policy (PP) generation, and build proposals with the communities, public institutions, and social leaders to promote democratic transitions towards greater achievements in social, cultural, and political peace in the territories.

One expected result is the design and consolidation of public policies that guide the peaceful transition in the territories. Hence, the importance of addressing the analyses related to concepts, approaches, methodologies, and content of public policies, and their relationship with the construction of several peace experiences and actions. To do this, it is necessary to search theoretically about the issue and propose a reflection to check the categories, and appropriate approaches and designs for the process in the municipalities.

The first part analyzes public policies as an ambiguous field of transdisciplinary nature, then reviews their connections with concepts such as 'participation', 'deliberative capacity' and 'mediation', as central axes in the formulation of public policies. The second part has to do with different concepts of peace (peace, in a broad sense), to highlight how different epistemological and methodological conceptions in pacifism determine approaches and tools in social construction. And the last part analyzes the connection between public policies and territorial peace as the working route.

As a conceptual precision, the concept 'instrument' is used in a close sense to Negri's. (2008). The public policies seen as instruments for peace consist of strategies of resistance, articulation of elements and orientation of practice in frameworks of power. There are collective and individual joints with the design of pacifist resistance instruments to transform conflicts and eradicate violence. The same author states: "[...] thus we subjectivize the power relationships that face the world, the society, institutional decisions and individual practices" (Negri, 2008, p. 45, own translation).

## **From Government Action to Participation and Collective Impact**

After decades of research about public policies, there is no univocal concept that is generally accepted by researchers and policymakers. However, the ambiguity of the concept and its growing connection with the processes of participation, political mobilization, social and citizen impact allow us to identify several relationships with collective peacebuilding processes in the territories affected by the armed conflict in Colombia.

To research further the conceptual and methodological connections, there is a review of PP to the territorial approaches of peace.

An important issue in conceptual ambiguity is stated by Aguilar (2015), the lack of consensus around PPs generates consequences for the concrete identification of actors' responsibilities, both in the social and political systems. This makes it difficult to distinguish from other type of State intervention instruments, such as programs, laws and projects, among others.

One of the main reasons for the lack of consensus of PPs is the polysemic nature of 'policy' and 'public', it enables different interpretations and working hypotheses (Rodrigues de Caires, 2018). In Spanish, there are at least three main meanings of 'policy': activities carried out to gain power, the execution of programs by public authorities, and activities related to corporate governance. (Roth, 2002). About the public, it can be understood as something that the private sector conceives as general interest and, therefore, leads through several means. (Aguilar, 1992). The fields of political science, administration, and sociology, among other disciplines, provide definitions that foster the lack of consensus.

The ambiguity in the conception causes that public policy proposals are not to be free from errors, and can be characterized by a certain degree of uncertainty. Under this perspective, on the origin and development of PP discipline, it is necessary to review different researchers who aim to clarify the scope and limitations of the concept. To this end, a review of the main approaches towards transdisciplinary configuration is presented.

Traditionally, much of the PP analysis focuses on the role of government institutions, which actions aim at achieving certain objectives and/or public problems that become public policy. (Montero et al., 2015). Meny and Thoenig (1992), define their study as the action of public authorities within society (p. 7), and consider the means to the results and the expected outcomes of public action.

In a challenging way, some authors believe that not only government action on solving social demands should be considered a public policy. The absence of such actions can also be considered within the definition. A public policy can also be what the government decides to do or not to do (Dye, cite by Ruiz, 1996). Oszlak and O'Donnell (1976) defines it as:

[...] a set of actions and omissions that expresses a particular modality of State intervention in relation to an issue that attracts the attention, interest or mobilization of other actors in civil society. From this intervention, it can be inferred a certain directionality, a certain regulation, that will predictably affect the future of the social process so far developed around the issue. (p. 14, own translation).

Thus, not doing and not making decisions to the social demands and situations as problems has consequences on contexts, actors and their expectations. Some authors ignore or omit the role of other non-state actors in the stages of the public policy cycle. Aguilar (2015) argues that the different definitions should start not only from the nature of the regime but also from the political system, the management of resources, and the mobilization of actors of several types around the needs and demands of the society.

From a broader perspective, this latter researcher gives three definitions that can be summarized as follows: 1. Government action led to social demands, include actors in both the problem and the solution. 2. The orientation of the State through government agencies to fulfil the guarantee of the State purposes and citizens' rights. 3. The result of joint action between the State and non-state actors using budgets and regulations to place a topic on the public agenda.

Another trend for thinking about peacebuilding in Colombia, is presented by Roth (2002), who argues that a public policy is built by the integration of both actions and collective necessary or desirable goals. They are fully or partially addressed by the organization of the Government to generate changes on a problem.

However, the ambiguity of some terms is not the only reason to explain the difficulty of reaching a univocal definition of the concept. In addition, public policies are changing. According to Majone (cited by Torres-Melo & Santander, 2013), public policies have a dynamic-peripheral component, it is made of actions to be changed, such as programs and projects; and a static-core component of ideas, values and other meta-political elements. Thus, according to Torres-Melo and Santander (2013), it justifies the relevance of designing flexible policies that adapt to changes of the population and to social dynamics without forgetting continuity in action.

Another point of interest that obscures these conceptions, is the intervention and interaction of other actors different from state actors in formulating and implementing public policies. It means, the perspectives by private actors and the community as a whole can affect and influence or not the decisions by the State (Oszlak & O'Donnell, 1976). The latter complex the approach to this type of policy, considering that through different instruments, the governments lead their actions to justify the social base and to satisfy the interests of actors holding decision-making power.

Therefore, it must be considered that interaction between actors with particular purposes, and in some opposite cases, should be carried out in the context of cooperation. Tensions arise due to the difficulty of adapting these particularities to the common interest or general welfare, and, therefore, state actors must agree on their strategies to articulate these perspectives to solve the problem. Therefore, state actors become more directors, mediators and articulators than decision-makers within the process. They start from the need to consensus plans and strategies in the management of resources limited for the demands of several types in the interaction among different actors (Torres-Melo & Santander, 2013). There is a definition that covers these parameters that according to public policies can be defined as follows:

[it is] a more or less wide set of actions, decisions and omissions; they generally involve both public and non-public actors; and they respond to situations that are seen as problematic through social and political constructions and therefore, they are listed as issues on the public agenda. (Rodrigues de Caires, 2018, p. 3, own translation).

Velásquez (2009) identifies three types of failures in defining the concept. The first one refers to those that have left out phenomena that could be public policies. Their normative nature should always reach a common goal or interest, and it is not clear if particular interests can take power due to the actors, against the general well-being. The second failure is the unknown or no inclusion of essential elements in the public policies to be seen as government instruments. They do not consider, for example, the goal of policy, the ways to achieve it, the participation of several actors, and processes of dialogue and concertation. The third failure, contrary to the first, focuses on too broad definitions to interpret and classify the instruments, activities and decisions as public policy, that are not, and generate confusion about what public management and other government functions are. Velásquez (2009) proposes an integrating definition to mitigate the confusion and inaccuracies caused by the three types of failures; for the author a public policy is:

An integrated process of decisions, actions, inaction, agreements, and instruments, promoted by public authorities with the eventual participation of individuals to solve or prevent a situation defined as problematic. Public policy is part of a particular context which it nourishes and seeks to modify or maintain. (p. 8, own translation).

While Velásquez's definition groups together many of the elements that had been left aside by other authors (non-action, the inclusion of non-State actors in the process, the context, etc.), it does not make the appropriate emphasis of citizen participation in public policy making.

In this regard, it is necessary to deepen into the concept of 'participation', understood by Nuria Cunill (cited by Pérez, 2019), as the intervention that social agents perform directly in public activities that from bases on rules for interaction, citizenship can be built, and public management can be improved.

Participation can have two approaches: in the management and transformation of conflicts for the tensions between the institution and the actors who demand greater inclusion in decision-making, and the consensus that looks for the implementation of formal and informal mechanisms to promote citizen

participation from legislation or political will in many cases generates legitimacy in public management (Pérez, 2019).

Moreover, Holguín (cited by Castillo, 2017) considers that this concept refers to the processes through which citizens are individually or collectively included in decision-making that affect different dimensions, and that can contribute to the human being and collective development. In the same text, Velásquez and González (cited by Castillo, 2017), highlighted the intentional action of one or more actors (directly or indirectly) from their interests and power, to generate changes or maintain the state of the political and social organization. In this area, there are important connections with territorial approaches of interest and peacebuilding.

Certain features of a public participation process can be highlighted, as it was mentioned, is a decision-making process that involves non-governmental actors with some influence. It is planned according to institutional processes and is expected to result in public policies based on social demands and needs. (Baba et al., 2009). As it will be seen, the connection between social demands, advocacy and peacebuilding is at the base of PPs in the territories.

Thus, with the concept of 'social participation', and its growing importance in the decision-making process in private and political issues, the public policies overcome the government intervention and involve the explicit consideration of active social actors that differentiate the concept of 'public action' (Chac, 2008). The next paragraph will address in more detail the deliberative perspective and the role of trust-building and its connection to participation. The following diagram summarizes the most relevant approaches and statements.

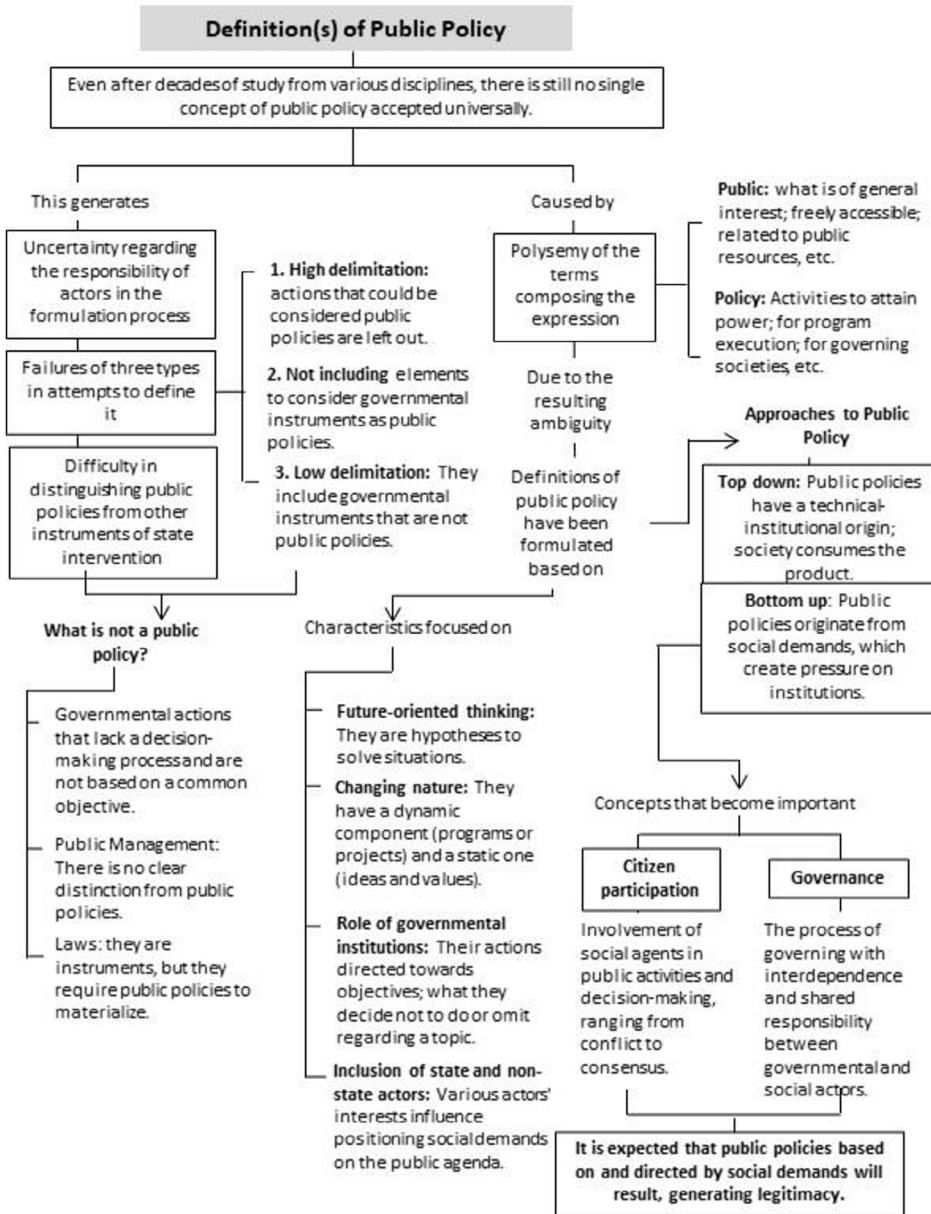


Figure 1. Summary Graph Definition of Public Policy.



## Public Policies Based on Trust, Decision-Making Capacity and Governance

While public policies are often conventionally defined as instruments for guiding public-state action, from other perspectives their role as a social mediator for the regulation, management and non-violent transformation of conflicts is also recognized. Hence, its connection with concepts such as ‘trust’, ‘deliberation’ and ‘governance’, as well as its transdisciplinary connection with communicative rationality, deliberation, argumentation, dialogue, discourses, and narratives, among others.

Trust can emerge from dialogue scenarios and become an articulating factor as a mediator in public policy-making. Brugué et al. (2018), state that doing community-building efforts—and promoting an organizational culture that favors citizenship—empower a common bet. According to these authors, it is necessary to build a double trust: both in the ability of citizens to participate in decision-making and the capacity of people with authority from government to make their own decisions (p. 3). This double condition is expressed in the connection between public authority and citizen participation.

In this way, double trust becomes a basis for collective decision-making: “the predisposition to trust others helps to reduce social complexity and offers a solution to the problem of strangers” (Brugué et al., 2018, p. 17, own translation). In terms of governance, this is a fundamental relationship for building political democracy and the ability to govern effectively. Trust among participants is a key factor in the deployment of deliberation.

While there is a reconceptualization in the political value of trust, public deliberation stands as a powerful strategy for building the common. This is a main practice of participation, in which an idea of the policy is implicit, as French (2016), states, it intends to create conditions of justice from public discussion and the negotiation of interests for the common good. This approach and decision-making capacity of citizens, without ignoring the forces and dynamics involved in the social order and whose analysis, introduces public policies to the fields of the power configuration. According to Barber cited by Chapa (2014), citizenship goes hand in hand with participation, deliberation and community. A citizen who does not participate in the deliberative process generates fake consensus. It is far from unleashing collective capacity for building fair and more democratic societies.

The proposal is for the construction of public policies based on trust, one that strengthens and re-thinks the link between institutions and subjects. For Cruces et al. (2003), the act of trusting implies the creation of a connection; that is, it forces the other subject by the deposited trust. Thus, it is based on the recognition

of the other as a legitimate other, as a political subject. It is about repersonalizing the subject, but as a being in “community-unity” that allows to restore the social fabric and weave bridges between the institutions and the world of life.

According to Cruces et al. (2003), trust is not considered as the one produced from faith or “dense truth” (it is given over time by face-to-face interaction) nor as “conformed”, with metaphors created as falsehoods, with rhetorical discourses as an “imitation” of trust. On the contrary, it would start from the assumption of cooperative suspicion, where the relations between institutions and users are viewed as a field of interest; but it is not limited to it, trust is proposed from recognition as a deliberative possibility for the exercise of governance.

In general, two approaches to public policy formulation can be identified: Top down and bottom up. The approach proposed for the project *Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios con la LAP*, is articulated with the constructivist perspective (bottom up). PPs have as their starting point social demands and conflicts of interest that generate pressure on the institutions to look for alternatives of collective solution (Chac, 2008).

In the approach of social demands, citizen participation is *sine qua non* in the formulation, design and implementation of public policies, that provide to the direct or indirect actors, the possibility to influence decision-making and direct the action towards the demand of interests that they consider public, and to improve problematic situations. It is a process of democratic deliberation, at the different stages of the process that looks for the strict balance of technical, instrumental, or institutional characteristic of the prevailing approach.

Public policies, as a collective process, are an essential part of democratic governance. According to Beltramin (2016), governance refers to:

[...] specifically to the procedures that enable the horizontal interaction between the public, private and social actors, in the broader context of an institutionality on large social agreements. (p. 5, own translation).

This essential interaction to the development of good governance can be achieved in participation and impact scenarios through negotiations between various actors. These can also generate networks in processes of policy production, self-government and democracy from the bottom.

According to Aguilar (2007), —in the approach defined by the author as ‘post-governmental governance’— social capabilities are seen useful for the leadership of society, in the face of the government's inadequacy as a leadership agent. Thus, taking into account the current social conditions, the limitations in managerial, technical and financial resources that demand capacities from the government and other non-governmental actors. Thereby, governance is

understood as a new management process of government, it includes the society in a non-vertical relationship, in a process framed in governability; whereas action must be effective and competent to interdependence between the actors at different levels who will deliberate and have co-responsibility in the process.

For the research purposes of the article, public policies involve actions, omissions, measures, instruments, and strategies of social interaction, that are materialized through the joint action of social and governmental actors (in a decision-making and mobilizing process that involve both participation and influence of several actors), to respond to social demands in several territories and levels of articulation to modify unjust, conflict or problematic situations. This complex and transdisciplinary understanding of public policies enables it to be connected to peacebuilding processes in the territories, as it will be seen below.

### **Peace and Public Policies: Two Categories in Territorial Dialogue**

A main point of departure for clarifying the relationship between public policies as a transdisciplinary field and peacebuilding as a category for the analysis and guidance of social agencement is the differentiation between research for peace and research of peace. For classical authors such as Galtung (2003), the first refers to social science studies focused on values that promote solidarity, cooperation, social fabric and justice, among others. From this perspective, any applied social research that promotes, generates or contemplates the deployment of potential human creators fits within the range of work for peace. The research of peace focuses on human and social constructions that have achieved the highest possible level of well-being, even in conflict and violent contexts. In this latter category, research conducted by pioneering researchers, such as Muñoz and Molina (2004) and Martínez (2000) can be included.

The research phases of and for peace can be traced in several authors. Martínez et al. (2009) and Jiménez (2009) identify and know routes of peace recognized as a field of study due to the political and academic concern for understanding triggering factors of wars during the twentieth century. Jiménez (2009) states:

During the nineteenth century, when war conflicts seem to shape social reality, the concept of peace begins to emerge, but without a theoretical articulation. With World War I and World War II the theory of peace begins to be developed. (p. 148).

The same authors identify three stages or phases in the research of and for peace. The first one was carried out between 1930 and 1959. In epistemological terms, this is a period focused on the deployment of a violent-logical and polemical approach to research the scientific understanding of war. The study focuses on the causes, dynamics, impacts and strategies of wars to avoid analyzing research. Peace (expressed in singular) is associated with the absence of direct violence, its conceptual correlate will be the negative peace, defined by Galtung (2003) as the lack of direct violence.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, a new international institution was created with the original purpose of recovering the devastated areas by the conflict, and create scenarios for dialogue between states to avoid wars. With the creation of the United Nations and a set of global institutions responsible for driving a version of progress on the prevailing ideologies of economic growth and social modernization processes, public policy agendas were designed to implement mechanisms for the promotion of economic development and modernization. (Escobar, 1996).

During the same period, in Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was responsible for designing and implementing policies that led the creation of developing states. In the same post-war scenario, political and institutional changes took place in a period of international political tensions, social revolutions in the periphery and arms races. In these contexts, social debates, and mobilizations around growing demands for policy for development were decisive in the content of pacifist movements and research.

With the establishment of the Peace Institute in Oslo, Norway, in 1959 studies of peace represented a political breakthrough. The concept of 'positive peace' was introduced, it connected pacifist struggles with the purposes of social justice and the integral development of peoples. The expansion of the meaning of peace constituted a central slogan for the demands of social movements, and announced its potential for the design, formulation, and implementation of public policies to eradicate poverty and transform inequalities that inhibit or constrain human and social capacities.

In the 1990s, fruitful and suggestive transformations in pacifist concepts and practices occurred. In the social science research, there were more frequent studies conducted on cultural and symbolic violence. The growing response dynamics of feminist movements, and multiple demanding expressions from sectors and groups of the population, traditionally excluded or marginalized, expanded the field of research related to violence, conflict and peace. The concept of 'cultural peace' achieved international status during the period with the purposes of the

United Nations, while the content of peace cultures was expanded in multiple possibilities for work in education and communication.

Perhaps one of the most suggestive approaches in that period is the approach of imperfect peace (Muñoz & Molina, 2004, 2009). The core of the approach is to make an epistemological change apart from research on peace defined as the end of violence. In imperfect peace, making peace involves thinking and acting on the basis of human and social capabilities to regulate and transform conflicts. The non-violent transformation of conflicts (as a feature of life) attracts researchers and communities to the social and political capacities of humans to settle them on the basis of mediation. Under this conception, violence is understood as a type of conflict in which the means are instruments to impose the will and interests of one party, and to sacrifice the well-being of the other.

To control conflicts by non-violent means demands that actors in stressful situations look for the highest possible level of collective well-being (Muñoz & Molina, 2004). In this context, peace unfolds in innumerable fields and possibilities; in several contexts and situations, it is possible to transform conflicts to move towards conditions of political, environmental, interpersonal, internal, social, family, international peace, among others.

In the field of research and social agencement, imperfect peace opens up the possibility of working in peaceful mediation actions to alternatives to territorial conflicts. This enables the implementation of public policies and other social strategies based on local realities and demands, created and expanded by communities and individuals who have developed capacity to make peace in adverse scenarios.

## **Conflicts, Peace, Public Policies and Territories**

Since 2002, in the context of the implementation of the democratic security policy that managed to militarily weaken the guerrillas (along with countless victimizing acts against the civilian population), humanitarian, national, and international organizations have promoted legal frameworks for the state action, humanitarian assistance, and re-establishment of people rights and populations victims of the conflict. Pécaut (2001) identified a feature of paradoxical appearance analyzing the role of the State and the deployment of public policies during the heaviest period of the confrontation:

The armed conflict takes place in rural areas and has not yet reached the cities. There are urban spaces such as Bogotá, where effective public policies aimed at changing living conditions have been pushed forward. (p. 17, own translation).

During the following decade, the military action of the State —implemented within the framework of security policy— and the paramilitary deployment in the territories altered the strength correlations of the armed conflict against guerrilla organizations. The war caused enormous humanitarian costs (forced displacement, kidnappings, confinement, recruitment of children, among other violations of International Humanitarian Law that victimize the civilian population, to more than nine million people). At that time, the current Government the core of the policy was to create security conditions to restore the investor trust, what is known as *liberal peace*.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the national political agenda was reoriented towards the generation of non-violent solutions to armed conflict, through direct dialogue and the signing of a peace agreement between an insurgent sector and the government of President Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018). The national public policy agenda was substantially modified with initial steps towards the implementation of the agreement content. One criticism of the process has been the low involvement of territorial actors in the design and formulation of agreements.

At the end of the government of Juan Manuel Santos, and the possession of Ivan Duque as President supported by the most critical political sector of the peace process, the government policy was directed at introducing adjustments and changes in the content and scope of the agreements. However, uncertainty and widespread crispation in Colombian society, and the relationship between peacebuilding and public policies with territorial approaches has oriented to the action of organizations, institutions and communities committed to create different life alternatives.

After the signing of Peace Agreements in 2016, between the national government and FARC-EP, there have been fractures, leaps and continuity in the transitional processes. At the same time, in some regions and territories such as *El Chocó*, *Bajo Cauca*, *Arauca*, *South East* and *Catatumbo*, the armed conflict over the control of legal and illegal economies has intensified. In municipalities in *Montes de María*, and in other regions of the Caribbean and the south-east of the country, dynamics of expanding paramilitary control and armed conflict between different armed structures are present.

The design, formulation, and implementation of public policies for peace involves recognizing different transitional processes (continuities, leaps and fractures), and different state agency group, community, national and international

agencies that must be recognized and coordinated. Nowadays in Colombia, the relationship between public policies and peacebuilding with a territorial approach is the subject of academic debates and different analyses that can still be considered as preliminary. Some work paths are found in the relationships between peacebuilding social processes and local-solidarial governance strategies; such strategies are based on the generation of political capacities based on individual and community potential.

Consequently, the territorial approach of public policies in several transitional processes implies assuming PPs as useful instruments for the generation of other realities, understanding the differential causes and implications of armed conflict, and the subjective, institutional and community potential for peacebuilding. In this regard, political capacities (organization, interlocution, resistance, non-violent transformation of conflicts and social leadership, among others) are the drivers of collective work that promote peaceful management and transformation of conflicts in territories affected by armed conflict, and the eradication of structural violence and other conflicts during the transition.

One main issue for the territorial peacebuilding on getting human and social responses —as alternatives to the conflict— can grow, multiply and sustain over time through the implementation of active policies that generate public value and base democratic practices; such as the generation of new institutions, social impact, empowerment, public-community coordination and public deliberation.

## **Methodological Framework for Research in the Territories**

While the territories have suffered huge humanitarian impacts from armed conflict (it must remain a research topic and intervention to stop and prevent it), it is also necessary to coordinate and implement work agendas to support, communicate and strengthen resistance processes and collective experiences of non-violent conflict transformations.

From a methodological point of view, research towards the recognition of peacemaking capabilities in territories can be supported by a design that integrates components of the public policy cycle, and elements of the routes designed in the work focused on imperfect peace. As an example, López (2013), proposes a methodological process into four phases that can be adapted as follows:

1. **Conflict recognition:** For research it is essential that participants characterize, debate, examine and understand territorial conflict. It is about recognizing the roots of conflicts, their actors, interpretations and actions. This involves the generation of knowledge dialogues and collaborative research processes involving multiple governmental, institutional and community actors.
2. **Strengthening mediation:** Mediation plays a main role in peacebuilding and cultivation of peace, when it comes to people, organizations and institutions that have expanded social and political capacities to understand and transform their conflicting realities. Mediators are constructors of other realities often use several social skills that contribute to the transformation of conflicts and provide countless learnings for public policy.
3. **Recognition of peace experiences:** A main issue in the imperfect peace approach lies in supporting public policies for peace in the territories, from the transformative experiences of communities and social organizations. The systematization approaches and methods used by social researchers can support communities and organizations in generating strategies to expand their policy capabilities.
4. **Expanding policy capacities:** The territorial peacebuilding demands to understand the conflict, recognize the capacities, and to broad the possibilities of collective political action. These capabilities involve the generation of leadership in democratic territories, trust, organization, and design of routes for the positive transformation of conflicts based on lively public policies.

## Final Discussion

At a level of normative formulation, public policies can be thought and implemented as “[...] a set of actors and institutions that shape the development of the territory” (Eslava, 2011, p. 24, own translation). In the field of social agencement, PPs could be considered expressions of agreements and disagreements that, in their heterogeneity, manage to be generators of collective values to positively



transformations of conflicts. The opposing interests in the policy-making process indicates that there is a matter of tension and controversy and that can be regulated or transformed in a peaceful way.

As communicative strategies for mediating social conflicts, public policies adopt a peaceful nature. As they involve forms of interaction in which participants look for the highest level of well-being depending on their own resources and contexts (Muñoz & Molina, 2004).

In the project «*Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios*», three dimensions can be identified in which public policies are twined with peacebuilding with a territorial approach:

1. Public policies, understood as useful instruments for social mediation processes, make sense to the extent that, as Berlin (2010) warns, policy is essentially a conflict of means, ends and interests. In this case, the media are not technical instruments, they build and expand actions for the generation of trust, capacity for deliberation, social and political impact.
2. The project «*Hilando capacidades políticas para las transiciones en los territorios*» carries out its actions in scenarios that have been or are hurt by the recent armed conflict. These are municipalities in which governmental political management is determined by clientelism processes, apparent and ineffective ways of citizen participation and involvement, founded distrust in the institutions and multiple expressions of old and new inequalities that involve developing the project with a sense of political reality.

In the framework of conflicts and multiple violences of the territories «*Hilando Capacidades*» considers the organization actions, men and women leaders, and several community and institutional actors—in countless processes of collective resistance to violence, and in social innovation processes to transform adversities and regulate social, economic, cultural and environmental tensions—to turn public policy approaches on the needs of individuals towards public policies based on collective potential achievements.

3. If the public policy cycle is understood as a set of policies and management operations useful for the collective construction or reconstruction of territories, it can be said that each of the phases of the cycle is, at the same time, a methodological route, and a space for conflict resolution learning. As literature states:

The positive notion of conflicts allows us to define them as situations of change to the overcoming of tensions and the creation of new objectives to future relationships. (Paris, 2009, p. 31, own translation).

In the territories in which the actions of «*Hilando Capacidades*» are carried out, the positive notion of conflict involves two tasks. The first involves alternatives based on dialogue, reconciliation and reconstruction of human relations to face the conflicts between radicalized actors. The second must be oriented towards supporting and co-creating spaces and processes to contribute to the transformation of conditions of injustice, inequality and lack of substantive democracy. This involves expanding collaborative education processes based on knowledge dialogues with participants.

The growing interest in the evaluation of public policies, the analysis of the performance of institutions and the active state action based on citizen incidence are relatively recent concerns in Colombia. It has become apparent in the context of the State reforms in the 80s, and with the adoption of the new Political Charter in 1991.

While civil society organizations have been driving public policies for human rights for years, it can be said that the community and institutional interest in linking public policies with territorial peacebuilding is much more recent. These initiatives largely arise from the agreements signed between the National Government and an armed insurgency sector in 2016.

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# Methodological Reflections from the Souths: Contributions to a Feminist and Decolonial Methodology\*

[English version]

Reflexiones metodológicas desde los sures: aportes para una metodología feminista y decolonial

Reflexões metodológicas do sul: contribuições para uma metodologia feminista e decolonial

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To reflect on the methodological approach, mainly on research that takes subalternated, racialized, and colonized groups as “subjects of study.” Those are groups that historically have been invisible and hidden in academic research due to acts of violence, epistemic extractivism, and discursive colonialism. **Methodology:** The fieldwork experience is systematized based on in-depth interviews with activists and the reconstruction of the political path of the Network of Afro-Latin

American, Afro-Caribbean and Diaspora Women (RMAAD), born in 1992 in the Dominican Republic. **Results:** The main contributions of feminisms of the global south,

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decolonialism, and Abya Ayala proposed in a profound reflection on methodological practices in the Latin American context are revealed. These contributions concern understanding the female subject in a heterogeneous, plural, and situated way, and question the idea of a universal woman subject, as well as the intellectual dependence on the global north and the claim of objectivity as part of social sciences and humanities.

**Conclusions:** Preliminary conclusions will be specified to open new remarks and to rethink, reformulate, and problematize methodological practices and the way knowledge is built in the Latin American and Caribbean academic fields.

**Key words:** local knowledge; practices; methodologies; genealogies; feminism (from UNESCO).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** reflexionar sobre el quehacer metodológico, en especial de las investigaciones que toman como «sujetos de estudio» a grupos subalternizados, racializados y colonizados; los cuales históricamente fueron invisibilizados y ocultados en las investigaciones académicas, producto de los actos de violencia epistémica, extractivismo epistémico y colonialismo discursivo. **Metodología:** se sistematiza la experiencia de trabajo de campo donde, a partir de la realización de entrevistas en profundidad a activistas, se buscó reconstruir la trayectoria política la Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (RMAAD), nacida en 1992, en República Dominicana. **Resultados:** se recuperan los principales aportes que los feminismos del sur, decoloniales y de Abya Ayala proponen a la hora de llevar a cabo una reflexión profunda sobre las prácticas metodológicas en el contexto latinoamericano. Aportes que tienen que ver con entender tanto al sujeto mujer de manera heterogénea, plural y situada, y poner en cuestión la idea de un sujeto mujer universal, como a la dependencia intelectual con el norte global y a la pretensión de objetividad propia de las ciencias sociales y las humanidades. **Conclusiones:** serán precisadas algunas conclusiones preliminares que intentan abrir nuevos interrogantes con el propósito de continuar repensado, reformulando y problematizando nuestras prácticas metodológicas y la forma en la que se construye conocimiento en el ámbito académico latinoamericano y caribeño.

**Palabras clave:** saberes locales; prácticas; metodologías; genealogías; feminismos (obtenidos del tesoro UNESCO).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** refletir sobre o trabalho metodológico, especialmente a pesquisa que toma como "sujeitos de estudo" grupos subalternizados, racializados e colonizados, que historicamente foram invisibilizados e ocultados na pesquisa acadêmica, como resultado de atos de violência epistêmica, extrativismo epistêmico e colonialismo discursivo. **Metodologia:** sistematiza a experiência do trabalho de campo, no qual, por meio de entrevistas aprofundadas com ativistas, buscamos reconstruir a trajetória política da Rede de Mulheres Afro-Latino-Americanas, Afro-Caribenhas e da Diáspora (RMAAD), fundada em 1992 na República Dominicana. **Resultados:** são recuperadas as principais contribuições que os feminismos do Sul, decolonial e de Abya Ayala propõem ao realizar uma reflexão profunda sobre as práticas metodológicas em no contexto latino-americano. Essas contribuições têm a ver com a compreensão do sujeito feminino de forma heterogênea, plural e situada, e com o questionamento da ideia de um sujeito feminino universal, bem como da dependência intelectual do Norte global e da pretensão de objetividade inerente às ciências sociais e humanas. **Conclusões:** algumas conclusões preliminares serão tiradas na tentativa de abrir novas perguntas para continuar repensando, reformulando e problematizando nossas práticas metodológicas e a maneira como o conhecimento é construído na academia da América Latina e do Caribe.

**Palavras chaves:** conhecimento local; práticas; metodologias; genealogias; feminismos (extraído do tesouro da UNESCO).

## Introduction

The European conquest in Latin America and the Caribbean meant the imposition of the colonial system and the subjugation of pre-existing indigenous peoples and those brought into slavery from Africa. It also established a system of beliefs and knowledge that deleted and silenced previous cosmovisions, thoughts, languages, and knowledge and established European experience as the universal (Lander, 2016).

These acts of silencing and concealing select experiences over others can be thought as acts of “epistemic violence” (Pérez, 2019) or “epistemic extractivism” (Grosfoguel, 2016). Moira Pérez (2019) refers to “epistemic violence” as the appropriation and use without recognition of the knowledge of subalternated or colonized groups such as African and indigenous knowledge. According to Ramón Grosfoguel (2016), these actions referred to “epistemic extractivism,” placed those who have the epistemic privilege as “superior,” while the “others” —the colonial subject— were relegated to “epistemic inferiority” (Grosfoguel, 2013).

Thus, this modern or colonial system of gender (Lugones, 2008), an imposed colonial regime based on social classification on racial and gender criteria, also involved the colonization of other areas of being and knowledge. This contributed to the imposition of a modern and European Western knowledge that still exists in universities and academic contexts. That is why, the construction of knowledge in Latin American and Caribbean regions merits a deep reflection and review, mainly on methodological practices.

For several decades, feminist, global southern and decolonialistic perspectives have taught about other possible epistemologies and methodologies that promote critical, complex, and multidimensional approaches on the ways knowledge is produced in universities. Experiences such as the *Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA)* [Andean Oral History Workshop], led by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and indigenous intellectuals in Bolivia, or Francesca Gargallo’s legacy (2006, 2010a, 2010b, and 2014) intended to recover the history of the ideas and feminist thinking of *Nuestramérica*, became a highly enriching legacy that reflects methodological practices in academic contexts, especially in social sciences and humanities.

Yuderkys Espinoza Miñoso, in *Tejiendo de otro modo: feminismo, epistemología y apuestas descoloniales en Abya Ayala* (Another Way of Weaving: Feminism, Epistemology and Colonial Wagers in Abya Ayala, 2014), with other feminists, decolonial, indigenous, African descendants, and lesbian authors and activists, builds political-epistemic displacements and critical analyses on several systems of power across Abya Ayala. First, the focus of this research is to contribute to

decolonial thinking on the implications of gender as a historical-political category in our region. Second, it proposes introducing into local feminisms a border view that considers the multiple forms in which colonialism acquires power, being, and knowledge, and disarms the feminist narratives that constructed—and construct—a female subject with pretensions of universality. Third, this complexity aims to make those voices and thoughts visible to “others” of Abya Ayala, based on a feminist and decolonial genealogy trajectory that heals wounds caused by the voices of activists, thinkers, and academics from this region (Espinosa et al., 2014).

This article reflects on the methodology of research that takes “subjects of study” as colonized groups historically invisible and hidden in academic research, from acts of epistemic violence (Pérez, 2019) and discursive colonialism (Mohanty, 2008). This paper recovers the fieldwork of the doctoral research toward the reconstruction of the political trajectory of the Network of African American, African Caribbean and Diaspora Women (RMAAD), born in 1992 in the Dominican Republic, and from the author’s teaching experiences in subjects related to the research methodology. It seeks to inquire into the standardized ways on the construction of knowledge in social sciences and humanities inherited from modern western thought, and the supposed objectivity and neutrality the scientific method traditionally has demanded.

Thus, some of the questions raised during this research became a starting point: how are “subjects of study” recruited? What about the places of privilege and oppression during fieldwork? Is a horizontal and feminist methodology possible? how to avoid seeing the “subjects of study” as objects? Are researchers able to “provide their voices” to subalternized and racialized subjects? How can research that promotes decolonization carried forward in our region?

To answer these questions, systematizing the fieldwork by detailing each of the tasks is proposed. Second, the research seeks to recover the main contributions of feminisms of the South, Decolonial, and Abya Ayala through a profound reflection on methodological practices in our context. Those contributions were extremely valuable in the fieldwork. Finally, preliminary conclusions are specified to open up new remarks to continue rethinking, reformulating, and problematizing methodological practices, and the way in which knowledge is built in Latin American and Caribbean academic context.

## Fieldwork and Meeting with Activists

This section is intended to review the methodological work, the tasks and activities conducted during fieldwork in the framework of the author's doctoral research. It aimed at reconstructing the political trajectory of RMAAD, born in 1992 in the Dominican Republic. This methodological practice promoted lessons and resignifications about the author's role as a researcher that will be explained.

This research dates from the middle of 2017, when after researching intersectionality in the United States, there was an interest in learning about the way a theoretical and political perspective was adopted in Latin American and the Caribbean region, taking into account the historical-political facts of this regional context. To address this question, an analysis was made of how the ways of understanding the intersection between the oppressions of gender, race, class, coloniality and sexuality were reconfigured and disputed based on the activism promoted by RMAAD from 1992 (when it was formed) until 2019 (the year of the beginning of a new general coordination in charge of Bolivia, which continues to the present) (Busquier, 2018, 2022a, 2022b). Thus, from this environment of a "feminist ear" (Ahmed, 2022, p. 22), an attentive, respectful, and careful listening was proposed to reconstruct and safeguard the genealogies and feminist memories (Ciriza, 2015).

The methodological strategy to conduct this research was in-depth interviews with RMAAD activists who participated in the beginnings or were currently participating. The analysis of several types of written documents produced by this organization such as bulletins, congress resolutions, balances, among others was conducted. In addition, RMAAD and other organizations' web and Facebook pages of were used. For the purpose of this article, the focus is on the interviews that included a meeting with "another" which mostly were distant from the author's reality. If "this distance" with activists caused difficulties during the interviews, they also led to rethinking and reflect on the methodology and connection with the "subjects of study."

The interviews were conducted and based on a set of axes in a "flexible conversational script" (Cohen & Gómez, 2019), the axes structured and led the interview. The first axis was the beginnings of activism, origins in RMAAD, the socio-political context, political definitions and strategic lines created by RMAAD, articulated strategies with other social movements, personal theoretical trajectories—such as readings and reference authors— theoretical training within RMAAD, and current activities. The intention was to avoid interrupting the narratives of the interviewees. The interview aimed to recount the trajectories

of their political, ideological and theoretical postures as activists, intellectuals, and teachers.

The first contact with interviewees was through one of RMAAD's founders, who at the end of the interview, suggested other activists who had participated or were participants. At the end of each interview, the interviewees suggested possible subjects, although some of them were suggested before. Emails, Facebook or WhatsApp were used to contact those activists who enabled a certain heterogeneity about geographical origins (Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Argentina), and time of participation in RMAAD (at the beginning or currently). Thus, there was a total of seven interviews conducted between January and June 2019.

There were video calls interviews due to geographical limitations and they lasted about an hour and a half. In all cases, an extensive and in-depth conversation was held about different perspectives, experiences, and reflections on participating in RMAAD, as well as the most important events, and the most relevant initiatives that were carried out, among other elements. From the third and fourth interviews, many of the interviewees' narratives began to show saturation in the responses, so the focus was on the particularities of the country or the organization of the interviewee, and not on general data such as the origin of RMAAD, as it had already been recounted in depth by founding activists.

Regarding the trajectories of the activists, five of the interviewees are developing academic activities at universities in the region, and two of them at institutional government as officials. Three of them were still in the formation stages when they joined RMAAD and the others joined in subsequent years. Three of the seven interviewees are still participating. Finally, although some of them no longer participate in RMAAD, they currently maintain some degree of political participation in some African descendant feminist organization, in artistic-political groups or in institutional contexts of government and universities.

The post-analysis of the interviewees was a textual analysis and the construction of a grid with the axes. Data was organized by theme, identifying the main categories within the pre-established axes. An axial codification was used to restructure and group the text records after an open codification into categories (Cohen & Gómez, 2019). At this point, while most of the axes were dealt with more or less in depth in all the interviews, in some cases, there was no deepening of the topic, such as the item referred to the personal theoretical path and the approach RMAAD provided to internal theoretic training. For this reason, this aspect was decided to not be included in the subsequent analysis.

There were other issues not previously considered in the flexible script. They were mentioned by most activists and then included as axes. One of these was the internal tensions and divergences throughout the political trajectory

of RMAAD. The initiatives of universities and other academic contexts was another axis that allowed inquiring about the entrances and crossing boundaries (Anzaldúa, 2016) between activism and the academy, political practices, and the construction of knowledge (Busquier, 2022b).

Even though the interviews were highly revealing and enriching material, they were not exempt from some difficulties, the first being online communication. As online communication is a way to circumvent geographical distances, there were technical problems such as connectivity that affected the communication process. Those made streamlining of the activists narratives difficult, as well as listening to and recording the information. In addition, online interviews did not allow the recording of non-verbal language as in ethnographic listening, that collects several elements related to observation, physical presence of the bodies, and silences, among others, that exceed the limits of verbal communication and the discourse of oral narrative.

The second difficulty concerned certain reactions or resistance from some potential respondents. Many of them accepted positively but others did not agree with the proposal. Some of them did not reply to correspondence, others explicitly expressed a desire to not participate or accept if the interview were in person. Although, the fourth group accepted, arranging the meeting was not possible due to other limitations.

Finally, despite some difficulties (often in the fieldwork), activists returned unfavorable response. The researcher's lack of experience conducting interviews before —personal limitations to contacting participants at the time of the meetings— the activists showed themselves to be affectionate, kind, and willing to share their experiences, perspectives, anecdotes, organizational documents, and bibliographic resources, among other materials. In some cases, this allowed the interviews to gain some degree of confidence, participants critically related some events within RMAAD or some political differences with other activists; something that, according to Pozzi (2020), usually happens when activists are interviewed. That is why, not all of the narratives were used. Narratives, opinions, and subjective assessments were excluded to preserve incipient intimacy and confidence with the interviewees during the meeting.

The following paragraph draws out the most relevant contributions of feminisms of the global south, decolonialism, and the Abya Ayala to produce a profound reflection on methodological practices in our context. These were extremely enriching to redefine some of the existing preconceptions before the fieldwork and to reflect on the links built with the activists interviewed.

## **Methodological Reflections in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Contributions to a Feminist and Decolonial Methodological Work**

In the field of social sciences and humanities, there are several debates, tensions, dissatisfaction, discontent, agreements, and disagreements that have undergone transformations and redefinitions over time with local and regional variations. This section systematizes the contributions that Southern and Decolonial feminisms propose on a profound reflection on methodological practices in our context.

As a starting point, stating that questioning the universal subject of women is one of the main axes that crosses much of the proposals from southern and decolonial feminisms is important. These questions point to universality in social sciences and humanities, in other words, to the fetishism of the abstract universal. These sciences originally aimed to develop knowledge that would explain and make rules regarding social issues (Wallerstein, 2006). This feature is necessary to guarantee the science of social knowledge and obtain the status of scientific knowledge (Pardo, 2012).

In the second half of the twentieth century, the claim of universality began to be questioned from different perspectives and fields of study. For example, the theory of the point of view of feminist like Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, and Nancy Hartsock seeks to question the standardized forms of knowledge production anchored in an androcentric logic, revealing their own experiences (Torrano & Fischetti, 2018). This means, to conduct research by women whose “subject of study” are also women or the social problems they face. The authors suggest “horizontality” as a closed link with shared experiences between the interviewer and the interviewee for fieldwork.

Black feminist authors such as bell hooks (2004) and Yuderkys Espinosa (2019) further intensify this criticism toward the claim of universality within feminist studies. In many cases, they also understand the subject woman in a universal way and make the differences between women of African descent invisible. This horizontality in feminist research, where the interviewer and the respondent would share certain common experiences, was criticized by Afro-Descendant feminism. It highlighted the inequalities and discrimination within feminist studies.

In other words, although the theory of the point of view first questioned the androcentrism and the universal view on the “subject” within the social sciences, it subsequently transformed into a homogeneous and universal female subject that obscured the diversity and heterogeneities of the group (Busquier, 2022b).



Thus, the productions of intellectuals of African descent that compromise black feminist based on their experiences and on their own perspective, put into practice a “localized” (Haraway, 1995) and specialized knowledge, or, according to Stuart Hall, a “policy of localization” in which knowledge is constituted from attending to the “positional” knowledge. (Hall, 2007, p. 271). Therefore, the fieldwork carried out with Afro-Descendent RMAAD activists meant a set of challenges in establishing a conversation that was “horizontal” and generate a degree of confidence with the respondents.

Despite the fact that the researcher and the interviewees can both be seen as “women” or feminized subjects that would experience similar violence and oppression, there were some differences in the realities of the two that prevented these discussions from taking place using terms like “horizontal” and “equal.” First, in most cases, they share academic contexts as many of them are referents and intellectuals at different Latin American and Caribbean universities. But their trajectories meant—and still mean—valuable contributions to this author’s academic, political, and theoretical formation. Thus, they occasionally took the role of “teachers,” in the interviews. They discuss their theoretical postures, political readings of the Latin American and Caribbean context, and analyze the implications of racism and gender in society. Also, the generational differences reinforced the link between “learner-teacher.”

Second, the interviewer or interviewee's involvement in any organization or social movement could be another “similarity.” This “common sharing” in activism facilitated a more intimate conversation about specific aspects related to the participation in an organization or movement. These included such as internal debates, mechanisms of choice and decision-making, creation of statutes, organization of meetings and assemblies, and internal roles. However, in the political trajectories of activists—most of them started in the early 1990s—the main claim was the fight against racism, and the implications of this form of violence in all aspects of their lives. As a white woman this did not appear as a priority dimension in the author’s activism. It was framed in the university student movement (mostly made up of white and middle-class people) and in white feminism in the early 2010s.

There are valuable contributions of the horizontal methodologies in recent decades that question the knowledge-power relationship between researchers and “subjects of study” (de la Peza Casares, 2020). The concept of horizontality becomes an impossible goal because, even with a permanent reflection during fieldwork, it will not be possible to neutralize and equalize the inequalities and privileges as social subjects (Briones, 2020). This does not prevent constructing respectful, ethical, affective, and equitable ties with the “subjects of study.” They are understood as protagonists in research, and also as producers of knowledge.

However, their own experiences allow the theoretical constructions to be carried out in the academic field.

Thus, the questioning of the universal subject of woman promoted by the feminisms of the south and decolonialism also enables discussing the idea of woman as a homogeneous subject, and enriches this category with the concept of race or class in understanding the realities of black women. In short, the categories from these marginal feminisms, such as racism, capitalism, nationalism, and sexuality, among others, interacted with the sex-gender category for white feminist thinking and made them complex, enriched, and optimized. To prevent generalizations and universalisms, this cross-cutting of categories needs to be considered from knowledge rooted in practice. The recognition and visibility of the voices of subordinated women, in this case Afro-descending activists, within feminist thinking enable the legitimacy of their political agencies, as well as their ability to engage in theoretical and epistemological enunciation (Medina, 2014).

Another of the relevant contributions of the southern and decolonial feminisms to methodological practice has to do with questioning the standardized forms of knowledge production. As they are based on a Eurocentric viewpoint, it obscures the local experiences and the epistemologies produced from “peripherals” or borders. Ochy Curiel (2010) states that many of the Latin American and Caribbean feminist productions are still based on studies and theoretical proposals from the Global North, that do not take into account local analyses and perspectives. For Curiel, it demands breaking with the intellectual dependence to carry out a critical theory and its own epistemology.

Yuderkys Espinosa (2009, 2010) analyzes how some Latin American feminisms still maintain some ideological dependency with the enunciations of European and American feminism. This reduces the potential of non-hegemonic feminisms that construct epistemologies, knowledge, and theories in post-colonial and decolonial regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean. To accomplish the task, the author proposes one of the possible ways to promote decolonial feminism: the one “that collects, reviews, and dialogues with the thinking and productions that come from developing thinkers, intellectuals, activists, fighters, feminists or not, of African descent, indigenous, *mestizo*, peasant, racialized migrants, as well as those white academics committed to subalternity.” (Espinosa, 2016, p. 151).

In the research conducted in 2017, this intellectual dependency marked the beginning of this inquiry, as at first learning about the “reappropriations” or “translations” that the intersectional perspective had received in Latin American and Caribbean region was proposed, as the local Afro-descendent feminism had been “influenced” or “inspired” by the Black Feminism of the United States.

This assumption was rejected when a reconstruction was carried out on the historical-political bases of struggles and resistance by black women in our region, who since slavery and the colonial regime questioned several systems of power that influenced their lives (Busquier & Parra, 2021).

Then, they checked particularities of Afro-Brazilian feminism, which in the second half of the twentieth century started to inquire on how racism, sexism, slavery and colonial regime affected Brazilian black women (Busquier & Parra, 2021). Finally, toward the end of the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century, oppression diversity and its intersection began to spread across other contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean, simultaneously and with the United States, and not as a consequence or effect of American Black feminism (Busquier & Parra, 2021).

The readings of Latin American and Caribbean theoretical references, as well as the communication held with the respondents allowed asking for those preconceptions and assumptions that claimed that intersectionality had “arrived” from the United States to Latin America and the Caribbean. On the contrary, forms that intersectionality adopted were questioned as a theoretical and political perspective in Latin American and Caribbean region taking into account historical-political issues of our context. This did not imply ignoring the valuable contributions of African American feminists such as Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, or Kimberle Crenshaw, among others. They were mentioned by most of the interviewees as the most relevant theoretical references.

To reveal the particularities and singularities of our region and put aside the universalist and eurocentric views, the questioning of the claim of objectivity by the feminisms of the south and decolonialism become another great contribution. Espinosa (2019) based contributions on the genealogy method and the theory of the point of view to propose a “genealogy of experience.” The author recounts “visual memory with speeches, feelings of joy, pain, victory or defeat, expectation, unbelief or certainty” (p. 2017) to carry out a genealogy of the experience of feminism in Latin America where the experiences become a valid document and file.

Gloria Anzaldúa (2016) within this approach from “frontier epistemology” proposes constructing a “self-history” or a “self-history theory” as a way to recover her own life story in a fictional way and construct a theoretical and epistemological proposal from her own experiences (Anzaldúa, 2016). The publishing *Esta puente, mi espalda. Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos* [This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color] (Moraga & Castillo, 1988) compiles writings by Third world women in the USA to tell their experiences that turned them into political and theoretical tools.

These writings can be thought of as a way of personal and collective witness. They seek to remove the barriers that border the private and the personal, the public and the collective, and that build a strong bond between these sectors and the possibility of doing collective actions (Busquier, 2016).

The main motivation for retrieving the experiences or political trajectories of the activists interviewed was to question the objectivity of the scientific method of the social sciences and humanities (especially the historical discipline) by considering their life stories, narratives, their sensations and their emotions as a valid testimony and documentation. The trajectory of feminist genealogies (Ciriza, 2015) or of genealogy of experience (Espinosa, 2019), and also the question on the construction of universal and objective knowledge, seeks to recover and visualize the historical and multiple forms of domination women of our region deal with resistance and emancipatory struggles against the several regimes of power (Parra & Busquier, 2022).

The narrative as a form of listening and recounting the experiences of the subjects is a possible path toward the construction of non-universalizing and objectivist methodologies (Ripamonti, 2017). In the —oral or written— narrative, the experiences, memory and memory of the “subjects of study” are merged with the references and perceptions of the one who tells the narrative. In other words, the narrative “constructs a practice of resistance to silence” (Ripamonti, 2017, p. 86) to the hiding and silence that historically experienced subordinated and colonized groups in Latin America and the Caribbean region. Thus, the narrative as a methodological tool seeks to disarm the scientific knowledge with pretensions of universality and objectivity and the historical narratives linear and eurocentric, while allowing “inhabiting the singularity of experience” (Ripamonti, 2017, p. 90).

This research on the political trajectory of RMAAD was specially aimed at recovering the political trajectory of the organization that additionally proposes a multidimensional view at several systems of power women of African descent in the region face. It aims at “giving voice” and visibility to these women who have historically been “forgotten” in the political, state, and academic contexts. The activists interviewed themselves became referents of great background and relevance in the areas they participate in. They install political and theoretical debates on the problems they face as women of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To make visible the collectives and political subjects from their practices, interests, requests, struggles, and resistance base political initiatives and enable the academic research to a political context (Busquier, 2022b). From experiences that, in most cases are alien, the author “tends the bridge, heals the wounds, writes

from the disagreements of the experiences of being a woman in Latin America” (Benavídez & Guerra, 2017, p. 6).

## Final Reflections

Reflecting on what to do methodologically has been gaining an important place in the academic constructions in the universities for some decades. Those who find themselves in this field and conduct research on “subjects of study,” subordinated, and colonized groups, which historically have been invisible and hidden in academic studies, must take on the challenge of, at least, reviewing, inquiring and problematizing the ways in which knowledge is built and link themselves with the “subjects of study.” From this point, systematizing the fieldwork of the research started in 2017 was proposed, and, secondly, recovering the contributions of feminisms of the south, decolonialism and of Abya Ayala proposing a deep reflection on methodological practices in our context. These contributions have to do with understanding the female subject in a heterogeneous, plural, and localized way; as well as stating the idea of a female universal subject, the intellectual dependence on the global north and objectivity inherent in the social sciences and humanities.

In relation to the universal female subject, these feminisms propose the construction of knowledge into the local and particular experiences of the subjects, especially black and indigenous women who are invisible within the universal woman subject proposed by white hegemonic feminism. They also enable rethinking the idea of a “horizontal” interview in which, while both researchers and interviewees can be read as women, their lives and trajectories are influenced by a series of privileges and oppressions that mark the particularities and heterogeneities of the female subject.

Neutralizing and equalizing the inequalities and privileges that inhabit individuals as social and political subjects in the face of complex and multiple ways of domination of our region and making social relationships is impossible. Feminisms from the south and decolonialism propose research that builds respectful, ethical, affective, and equitable ties with the “subjects of study.” Understanding them as protagonists in research, and also as producers of knowledge is important. However, their own experiences is what allows theoretical construction to be carried out in academic contexts. Thus, narratives, as a way of listening and talking about experiences, become a possible path

toward the construction of non-universalizing and objectivist methodologies that recover the unique experiences and heterogeneities of the subject.

In addition, the feminist perspectives of decolonialism and the south provide the tools of inquiry from and about local knowledge and the importance of constructing an epistemology. Decolonial feminism is responsible for articulating the proposals of thinkers and intellectuals belonging to the academic sphere, but it also brings together the perspectives of activists of African descent, indigenous, migrant and peasant women, among others. It aims at making visible the heterogeneities in feminisms of the region and carrying out the construction of a feminist epistemology of the south and decolonialism to break with the intellectual dependence with the great theories of the global north.

Against the claim of objectivity in the scientific method of the social sciences and the humanities, the feminisms of the south and decolonialism propose to carry out the construction of feminist genealogy and genealogies of experience, which pose the experiences as a valid document and file. Furthermore, it recovers the experience, political trajectories and life stories of the subalternized and racialized women of our region to make visible and enhance several strategies by such women to resist multiple forms of domination in the Latin American and Caribbean context.

In short, these were some of the reflections from methodological practices during this research. Reflections that still today remain open and in dialogue with other research experiences, and that allow rethinking the methodological doing from a feminist and decolonial perspective. According to Maria Lugones (2021), “‘travel’ to worlds of meaning that are not given as part of daily ‘teachings’ of the dominant structures of meaning is one of the techniques, it is an art, of moving from resistance to liberation ...” (p. 20, own translation).

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COGNITIVE SCIENCES:  
TOWARDS A CROSS-  
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

# Reflec tion

Reflexión · Reflexão

# Naturalization of Philosophical Concepts Underlying Interculturality and Proposal of the Neurocognitive Model 'Elemental Intercultural Imprint'<sup>†\*</sup>

[English version]

Naturalización de conceptos filosóficos de base de la interculturalidad y propuesta del modelo neurocognitivo 'Huella Intercultural Elemental'

Naturalização de conceitos filosóficos fundamentais da interculturalidade e proposta do modelo neurocognitivo 'Pegada Intercultural Elemental'

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The study proposes an exploration of dyads (philosophy-cognitive neuroscience) that constitute the basis of interculturality, leading to the postulation of the Elemental Intercultural Imprint as a neurocognitive model that impacts the ontological notion of 'interculturality,' viewed under the naturalizing project.

**Methodology:** An analytical conceptual methodology was implemented, aiming to demonstrate the modes of naturalization of philosophical concepts descriptively and critically. The following hypothesis is maintained: the progressive naturalization of consciousness, self-control, identity, social mind, alterity, and morality can reveal the neurocognitive mechanisms of interculturality in individuals. To this end, the naturalization of consciousness as attention, identity as self-reference memory, self-control as self-regulation, mind (social) as Theory of Mind, alterity as empathy, and morality as moral cognition are analyzed. **Results:** The conceptual analysis in the reviewed studies found that partial epistemological transposition and methodological symmetry are the most common mechanisms of naturalization of the components of interculturality, and that its neurocognitive architecture allows for the incorporation of other components. **Conclusions:** It is concluded that the proposed neurocognitive basis is indispensable for the empirical study of interculturality.

**Keywords:** naturalization; philosophy; cognitive neurosciences; interculturality (obtained from the UNESCO thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** en el estudio se propone un recorrido por díadas (filosofía-neurociencias cognitivas) que constituyen la base de la interculturalidad, lo que deriva en la postulación

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de la Huella Intercultural Elemental en calidad de modelo neurocognitivo que repercute en la noción ontológica de 'interculturalidad', vista bajo el proyecto naturalizador.

**Metodología:** se implementó una metodología analítica conceptual, cuya aspiración es evidenciar descriptiva y críticamente los modos de naturalización de conceptos filosóficos. Se sostiene la siguiente hipótesis: la progresiva naturalización de la conciencia, el autocontrol, la identidad, la mente social, la alteridad y la moral puede desvelar los mecanismos neurocognitivos de interculturalidad en las personas. Para tal efecto, se analiza la naturalización de la conciencia como atención, de la identidad como memoria de autorreferencia, del autocontrol como autorregulación, de la mente (social) como Teoría de la Mente, de la alteridad como empatía, y de la moral como cognición moral. **Resultados:** a través del análisis conceptual en los estudios revisados, se halló que el traspasamiento epistemológico parcial y la simetría metodológica son los mecanismos más comunes de naturalización de los componentes de la interculturalidad, y que su arquitectura neurocognitiva permite incorporar otros componentes. **Conclusiones:** se concluye que la base neurocognitiva propuesta es indispensable para el estudio empírico de la interculturalidad.

**Palabras clave:** naturalización; filosofía; neurociencias cognitivas; interculturalidad (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o estudo propõe uma exploração das díades (filosofia-neurociências cognitivas) que constituem a base da interculturalidade, resultando na formulação da Pegada Intercultural Elemental como modelo neurocognitivo que influencia a noção ontológica de 'interculturalidade', vista sob o projeto de naturalização. **Metodologia:** foi implementada uma metodologia analítica conceitual, cujo objetivo é evidenciar de forma descritiva e crítica os modos de naturalização de conceitos filosóficos. A seguinte hipótese é sustentada: a progressiva naturalização da consciência, do autocontrole, da identidade, da mente social, da alteridade e da moral pode revelar os mecanismos neurocognitivos da interculturalidade nas pessoas. Para tal efeito, analisa-se a naturalização da consciência como atenção, da identidade como memória de autorreferência, do autocontrole como autorregulação, da mente (social) como Teoria da Mente, da alteridade como empatia e da moral como cognição moral. **Resultados:** através da análise conceitual nos estudos revisados, constatou-se que a transferência epistemológica parcial e a simetria metodológica são os mecanismos mais comuns de naturalização dos componentes da interculturalidade, e que sua arquitetura neurocognitiva permite a incorporação de outros componentes. **Conclusões:** conclui-



se que a base neurocognitiva proposta é indispensável para o estudo empírico da interculturalidade.

**Palavras-chave:** naturalização; filosofia; neurociências cognitivas; interculturalidade (obtidas do tesouro da UNESCO).

## Introduction

You are very aware that exercising control over your own habits, if not the most important business in life, is at least very close to being so. (Peirce, 1908, p. 3).

The dichotomy of internalist and externalist cognition has persisted throughout history and is still deserving of review today (Gazzaniga, 1993). Both concepts originated in and evolved from different disciplines. On the one hand, cognitive psychology, which emerged in the 1960s, focused on the study of the structures of knowledge, the processes of thought, and the mental activities of the individual; it would later take new directions toward the consolidation of neuropsychology, which is concerned with brain structures and cognitive functioning. Sociology, on the other hand, finds the role of action and the structures of groups and individuals essential for building knowledge in humans, thereby culture is what provides the niche for the development of cognition (Serpell, 1993).

In this discussion, culture is understood as a purely social concept of an anthropological, externalist nature, mostly motivated by human action and expressed by abilities and habits. This was stated by Edward Tylor, one of the first pioneers to define today's prevalent concept of culture. In his work, this author states that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 2018, p. 23). As can be seen, the process of acquiring such a skill set goes unnoticed, since both the structure and function of widely diverse and complex concepts (knowledge, morality, customs, etc.) are left aside, as are those that require attention and detail to provide coherence to the possible articulation that generates the complex skill set that Tylor mentions.

As stated previously, the two routes to addressing cognition related to culture and interculturality seem to be firmly rooted in their respective traditional conceptual fields. Thus, an epistemological perspective providing the means to understand the phenomenon of (inter)culture underlies each discipline. This

is why determining the point of articulation between the two epistemologies that supports the current view of culture and provides the basic structures of human cognition becomes necessary. The possibility of an articulatory point allows discussion about the phenomenon of the creation of cultures and their interaction, as well as the emergence of interculturalities as an oscillating doorway between oneself and others (Han, 2017). To achieve this, it is crucial to put at the center of the phenomenon the cognitive processes that give place to the roughly speaking prototypical human acts and behaviors of a group and their cultural traits. Otherwise, the study of actions and behaviors would be insufficient to help understand the structure and function of the cognitive processes that give birth to culture. Similarly, to contemplate the sum of cognitive processes as a condensation of culture in individuals without deterring those fulfilling a specific role in the cultural domain would disregard the basic and differential characteristics that culture creates in the human being.

In this regard, two authors who have taken different approaches to explain the role of culture in human cognition must be considered: Michael Tomasello and Antonio Damasio. Tomasello (2007) defends the thesis that shared cultural practices and intentions influence human cognition. This evolutionary psychology perspective establishes the social character of humans, placing group interaction at the center of the basis for cognition. Interaction implies joint attention, shared goals, and collaborative endeavors between members of a group. To facilitate such interaction, Tomasello (2008) argues that language fulfills the dual role of communicating and transmitting concepts and values from one generation to another. In other words, cognition is embedded in social activities mediated by a system of cultural significance (Serpell, 1993). In this way, social cognition represents a socially necessary trait, in contrast to individual cognition, since humans engage in activities where desired goal achieving can only be done in collaboration with others. An example of this is the interpretation of the actions, desires, and intentions of others, as well as their beliefs and knowledge, translated as cognitive constructs that promote or restrict the demeanor and development of a given group (Van Dijk, 2014).

According to Damasio's (2018) central thesis on the role of culture in cognition, cultural values function as somatic markers in interface with emotions, and this, in turn, influences the cognitive processes of individuals. This neurocognitive view calls into question the classical view of internalist cognition of higher cognitive processes that function independently of emotions and, consequently, culture (Han, 2013; Han & Ma, 2015). In this fashion, the search for the homeostatic imperative (desired equilibrium) at a cultural level will be satisfied by the meeting of norms, cultural practices, beliefs, and values (moral systems) with the levels of consciousness of people who interpret emotions and

transform them into feelings that govern group selection, its permanence, and its evolution over time (Damasio, 2018).

In short, considering the social nature and neurological substrate of culture to approach it appears to be both pertinent and necessary. One cannot think of culture without the role of emotions, consciousness, and morality, or without human interaction, socialization, and communication. Therefore, the encounter of the two ways of understanding culture is what gives place to the concept of interculturality. To be more specific, interculturality has been defined as a dynamic process in which the human being moves past from their subjectivity (consciousness in Damasio) to intersubjectivity (the collective in Tomasello). Similarly, the most complex concepts of shared intentionality, social beliefs, social representations, shared values, and joint attention and action, among others, are born with the encounter between the individual and the group (Rodríguez, 2018).

Essentially, on the one hand, interculturality brings in some philosophical reflections that account for the flow of different epistemologies without mutual rejection, *mutatis mutandis* (Gosselin, 2010). On the other hand, it brings holistic ontologies which possess such characteristics. Hence, the claim that this manuscript focuses on is the mechanisms of naturalization of the philosophical concepts (Estany, 2022b) that are the basis of interculturality and its encounter with cognitive neuroscience. In this way, while conceptual and theoretical problems such as validity, relativity, objectiveness, and subjectiveness, among others, are involved, the focal point of this study is to reveal the mechanisms of naturalization of philosophical concepts and their possible neurocognitive substrate. The scope and saturation of such encounters will be discussed in the final paragraphs of this article. However, there remains the question: What are the mechanisms of naturalization of consciousness, self-control, identity, alterity, social mind, and morality through the prism of cognitive neuroscience?

## Methodology

Following a non-exhaustive and heterogeneous conceptual analytical approach (Zanghellini, 2017), the methodological foundation of the study comprises three specific processes. The first process consists of the conceptual approach and

description of the philosophical constructs anticipated *a priori*. The second process consists of the previous analytical encounter with a hypothetical-deductive approach, where the naturalization of each philosophical concept is reviewed by following the three classical possibilities: methodological symmetry, epistemological replacement (partial or total), and analogy (Estany, 2022a). Based on the preceding, one deduces that processes one and two are coherently interconnected, so they are not presented in isolation. The third process consists of presenting the proposal for the Elemental Intercultural Imprint model (ELINIM), which serves as a complement to the two preceding processes.

## Results

### **Parallel between the Philosophical Unit and the Neurocognitive One: Towards a Conception of the Basis of Interculturality**

Below there is an analytical conceptual analysis of the natural replacement from consciousness as attention, self-control as self-regulation, identity as self-reference memory, alterity as empathy, the (social) mind as Theory of Mind, and moral as moral cognition.

#### **From Consciousness to Attention**

A brief epistemological journey shows that the concept of consciousness has been the subject of extensive debate without a categorical answer. Numerous philosophical perspectives on consciousness involve an introspective and subjective process. This idea was first established by Descartes (2003), who viewed consciousness as a personal and internal testimony. Likewise, Diderot and D'alembert (2017) argue that *conscience* is "the opinion or inner feeling that we have of what we do" (p. 243). In contrast, consciousness is also conceived as a neurobiological substrate-based perceptual process. Plato was one of the first to suggest that consciousness-related phenomena reside in the brain, calling into question the deliberate attitude of introspection (Dal Maschio, 2018). Locke (1999) defines consciousness as "the perception of what passes in a man's own mind" (p. 98). In this manner, the perceptual stance of consciousness affords the opportunity to empirically investigate it via brain structures. Hence, the position of consciousness at the level of perceptual processes (Dehaene, 2014)

and attention (Graziano, 2015) would be situated exclusively in the soft problem of consciousness, excluding the naturalization of consciousness as a subjective interpretation of experience (Chalmers, 2013).

As is evident, a form of epistemological reductionism that confines consciousness to a physiological state of the nervous system has supported its naturalization. This starting point categorically rejects as the basis of consciousness perspectives of metaphysical (Chalmers, 2017) and quantum (Stapp, 2001) natures because they escape a positivistic approach, that is, to constitute a tangible, measurable, and falsifiable phenomenon. Once again, the emphasized method of naturalization is the reduction of the phenomenon to a tangible extent that allows us to define consciousness as "a functional state of the brain characterized by synchronization in the oscillatory activity of certain populations of neurons distributed in different centers and connected to each other by loops" (Ferrús, 2018, p. 14).

With such an evidence-based epistemological stance, it is worth observing the most prominent model in terms of empirical experimentation with consciousness. Following the postulates of Baars (1989), Dehaene et al. (2006) suggest that the code of consciousness is explained by the Global Neuronal Workspace. This theoretical construction stands out for "acceptance of specific brain centers and connectivity pathways for conscious processing" (Ferrús, 2018, p. 74). As neurocognitive support, the authors postulate, from their experiments at the level of visual attention, three systems of the Global Neuronal Workspace, which would begin with a subliminal state, advance to a pre-conscious state, and end in the final conscious state. The rise of this proposal topographically collects the involvement of a greater number of neurons in each stage, being merely sensory at the beginning and completely cognitive in the latter. The connectionist perspective would be given by two orientations: horizontal and vertical. The former lies in the connection of pyramidal neurons to intracortical areas, and the latter lies in the joining pathways of the thalamus with the prefrontal and parietal cortex (Dehaene et al., 2006).

## **From Identity to Self-reference Memory**

Since Aristotle, there have been three fundamental laws that directly impact the ontological nature of entities and the properties that define them: 1) the law of identity; 2) the law of excluded middle; and 3) the law of non-contradiction (Aristotle, 1983). In this section, the focus is on the first law regarding the fact that entities are identical to themselves, expressed in the logical formula  $\forall x x=x$  (Ruiz, 2018). Parmenides had already argued that "what is is, and what

is not is not", because "one cannot, at the risk of some loss in communication, maintain both that something is and that it is not" (Stannard, 1960, p. 531). This conception of identity has contributed to the origin of the most classical laws of thought (Audi, 1999), but it is not necessarily the notion that gives birth to the psychological identity referred to as the Self, defined as follows:

[...] A set of meanings applied by actors to the physical and subjective reality, more or less blurred, of their lived worlds, built through another actor. Thus, identity is a perceived sense given by each actor about himself or other actors. (Mucchielli, 1999, p. 60).

Psychological identity may appear in the form of applied meanings and it may have the pretension of naturalization, if cognition gives rise to the identity of substance and relationship (Saussure, 1978), one in which people find habits (and frameworks of validity) as interpretants (Colapietro, 1989) of their experience. In this way, the sense of the Self emerges consciously, individually, and subjectively, allowing the subjects to know themselves in relation to the still-emerging difference with others (Akin, 2018). From this standpoint, it is understood that the concept of identity would rely on the neurocognitive constructs of memory and consciousness since it is necessary to pay attention (Dehaene et al., 2006) to the lived experiences (their essence and relationships: the Eidos) that are transferable to other moments and valid for themselves through habits (Colapietro, 1989).

The above means that one could expect a naturalization of identity through the Global Neuronal Workspace, consciousness, on the one hand, and of the hippocampus, amygdala, certain cortical areas, and other memory-related neurological structures on the other hand.

Functional magnetic resonance studies found that the medial prefrontal regions are involved in self-related processing (Denny et al., 2012). In addition, injuries in this area affect self-reference memory, so the neurons associated with it have been referred to as the self-neurons (Martone, 2022). Particularly, the ventromedial prefrontal region is usually activated during tasks requiring self-reflection, and both the ventromedial and dorsal prefrontal cortex are activated when the subjects reflect on their current situation against their past selves (Stendardi et al., 2021).

According to Martone (2022), lesions influencing the groups of neurons responsible for the past self and its projection into the future result in substantial changes to the self-concept of identity. Differences between healthy people and those with lesions in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex are widely significant in terms of their own descriptions using adjectives located in past and future contexts, with the linguistic reservoir to refer to those contexts being reduced

in people with injuries (Stendardi et al., 2021). Addis and Schacter (2011) demonstrated that, by stimulating the hippocampus, people find it harder to talk about themselves and project themselves into future plans, which would have an impact on their episodic memory. As expected, the concept of identity (as self-reference) is required for the ethnocentric stages that will then become ethno-relative (Chen & Starosta, 2000), and its naturalization is possible through methodological symmetry and the transfer of philosophy and psychology to cognitive neurosciences.

### **From Self-control (the Self as Center of Power) to Self-regulation**

Thinking of consciousness as a perceptual and attentional process entails seeing the powers that a person can activate toward their power and control. The concept of self-control originates from Peirce's theory of signs (1908), which leads to human agency. The author proposes that agents possess the power to exert real, albeit limited, control over the course of their behavior, manifested in three levels of creative powers: the power of sensation, the force of action, and the strength of habit formation. In Peirce's words, "The self is a center of power and control" (Cited in Colapietro, 1989, p. 42). Ergo, Peirce repeatedly discusses the close relationship between self-control and human characteristics, i.e., the branches of their social relationships and the goal to which every subject aspires (Boero, 2009). These social relationships indicate the need for self-control to create interculturality; without the ability to resist instinct and impulse in favor of self-regulated actions, the principle of cooperation and survival could not take place (Tomasello, 2007).

Following that, the semiotic perspective of Peirce (1974) assumes a triadic relationship between a sign or representative (firstness), an object (secondness), and an interpreter (thirdness). The existence of the sign is essential for a relationship between the object and the interpreter to exist. The sign is something that represents another thing, its object, as distinguished from the dynamic object. Specifically, the dynamic object is composed of the real object and the mediated object; the object, as it is, is represented by the sign, and the interpretant is its resultant effect. Conspicuously, the semiosis system is itself a regulation and self-control system that rests on the interaction of firstness, secondness, and thirdness (Colapietro, 1989). This system provides entities (subjects in this case) with dynamic roles that activate and inhibit functions as their triadic relationship changes.

To illustrate, while the object determines a sign, the sign determines the interpreter; the latter can modify signs in the future, while, as a product of this first semiosis, the first interpreter passes to the place of the sign in a new and

repeated semiotic triad, generating "continuity", an infinite flow of signs that occurs inexorably in a context. In Savan's (1988) words,

[...] one must ask, what is the context within which the sign functions, for its community of interpretants? And what, within the context, makes the difference between true and false, correct or incorrect, acceptable and unacceptable, in the functioning of the object of such signs. (p. 16).

Here, the regulatory character of the context is also depicted, it leads to the assumption of validity criteria, which depending on the context, will limit the power of the Self.

As a transition to cognitive neurosciences, a partial reduction, in which the interpreter (the effect that generates a sign) can be different in nature, namely, 1) emotional: understood as a practically automatic and instinctive primary process; 2) energetic, which implies passing to the deadline of a particular action; and 3) normative, in which interpreters obey a more general, common and conditional order. It is from these final interpreters that the subject consolidates habits (Vilà, 2015), that is, the disposition to act in a certain way in certain circumstances, and to attribute a certain meaning to a certain sign in a particular and familiar context, which is translated as a social and collective act, i.e., intercultural. In Peirce's words, "to learn is to acquire a habit" (Cited by Colapietro, 1989, p. 88) and the habit is formed by the effect of the previous signs, such as catalysts that reinforce or change habits using what the subject considers valid or true (Boero, 2009).

Colapietro (1989), paraphrasing Peirce (1877), asserts that the human mind is an extraordinarily complex and hierarchically ordered network of habits, the majority of which are not the result of the activity of the mind but rather the result of the innate constitution of our bodies or the actual course of our experience. Here, the Self, or the capacity for control and power of the human mind, is released and uses its creative powers as an autonomous agent. Following Peirce, the type of mind that can evolve into a Self, an autonomous agent, must possess three powers: to feel, to act, and to learn. In the first place, this includes not only being able to experience emotions but also having the capacity to become conscious and control one's emotions; in the second place, the power of action that allows the subject to modify something; and in the third place, the power to acquire habits, which is only possible when the subject has passed through the two preceding powers.

In distinguishing the cognitive mind from the rational mind, Colapietro (1989, p. 113) summarizes Peirce's position, indicating that all agents with the capacity for acts of interpretation possess a cognitive mind, even if such acts are instinctive. Nevertheless, it is a mind that, in addition to being cognitive,



has control over some of its acts of inference, meaning that it can regulate the formation of several of its behaviors. Peirce's insistence that reasoning needs self-control and self-criticism stems from the previous idea. It can be deduced that the most important aspect of mental phenomena would be the autonomous agent's control over its own behavior. According to Colapietro (1989), "the phenomena of the mind are *either* themselves the principal objects of criticism and control" (p. 106), which can be interpreted as factors in the process of self-directed action. The author identifies the following as foundational elements of the Peircean perspective. 1) Semiosis, in which consciousness functions as a sign. 2) The habit, which predisposes the agent to act in a particular manner under specific conditions. 3) Self-control autonomy, which allows the subject to regulate their behavior based on social and ideal norms. Lastly, the capacity for self-control and self-criticism enables autonomous agents to evaluate and critique each action considering their future behavior.

According to Carver and Scheier (2011), human behavior is a continuous flow of actions aimed at achieving objectives, accompanied by constant feedback on the behavior itself. This requires self-evaluation and the ability to correct errors to make the necessary adjustments and remain on the path toward the desired goal, which typically entails resisting impulses or responding to external disturbances. In this view, self-control is associated with the ability to manage the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources necessary to achieve an objective; this includes adapting to change and accommodating and modifying behavior in response to environmental demands (Robledo & Ramirez, 2023).

In general, self-control enables the subject to inhibit a predominant or automatic response, thereby enabling alternative, rational responses. The subject would be at the mercy of his impulses and instincts if he lacked this capacity for self-control (Baumeister & Monroe, 2014). From this epistemological perspective, the key term for comprehending self-control is 'goals', which can be translated as the projection of behavior to a moment in the future with a specific purpose (Carver & Scheiler, 2011). This premise appears consistent with Peirce's conception of self-control as the capacity of an individual to moderate their emotions and behaviors through reason and, as a result, to direct their actions from ideals rather than biological impulses.

To identify the neurocognitive substrate that supports and naturalizes self-control, it is necessary to distinguish between two regulatory processes. From one angle, every living organism possesses physiological self-regulatory mechanisms of an autonomic nature that drive the continuous pursuit of systemic equilibrium (homeostasis). From another angle, this discussion focuses on the processes of intentional self-regulation, as such processes normalize a distinct

autoregulatory capacity in the human cognitive processing capacity (McGeer & Pettit, 2002).

Cognitive neuroscience's approach to the human capacity for self-control has been progressive. One of the first contributors to this discussion was Luria (1981), who posited three interconnected functional nodes: the first functional unit is associated with the alert-motivation mechanism, composed of the limbic and reticular systems; the second unit is responsible for the reception, processing, and storage of information, integrated by the post-Rolandic cortical areas; of association and the third unit is responsible for programming, control, and execution.

Luria conferred the prefrontal cortex, in conjunction with other subcortical regions, the primary responsibility for regulating, monitoring, and managing the subject's responses. In an analogy proposed by Goldberg (2015), the prefrontal cortex can be seen as the CEO of the nervous system, in charge of superior cognitive functions, like executive functions, implied in the control of thought, action, and emotion (Müller et al., 2009). In essence, the prefrontal cortex would be responsible for higher-order cognitive processing, and its function would be to foster the development of pre-cultural and pre-moral states in humans, thereby promoting the emergence of cultures (Damasio, 2014).

### **From the Mind (and the Social Mind) to Theory of Mind**

One of the most traditional ideas of philosophy is that humans and, to varying degrees, other primates possess mental abilities that are traditionally interpreted as products of structural and functional brain processes which are less tangible, to some extent (Bruner, 2018). Descartes' rigorous description of the qualities of the mind is the outcome of his work on thought (Rodríguez, 2018). The mind is an object of study in phenomenology, psychology, and philosophy of mind, among other fields. However, the mind is often seen as the antithesis of eliminative materialism due to the dualistic nature inherited from Descartes, which forces us to picture it as a metaphysical construction. Because of this epistemological reductionism, the naturalization of the mind is usually equivalent to the product of the functioning of the central nervous system (Bruner, 2018). Therefore, the mind consists of at least states of consciousness, identities, and self-control (the self as center of power), which can be empirically observed as attention, self-reference memory, and self-regulation.

However, the individual mind would succumb to solipsism, which would prevent him from recognizing interculturality. In this regard, Peirce postulates semiotic interaction, which includes contact with other minds, as discussed

previously. In this regard, there are two valid premises: "the community precedes the individual" and "the self knows itself in relation to others" (Cited by Colapietro, 1989, p. 73). The first premise demonstrates that human beings are born with the essential baggage to be influenced by the signs of a world that is already physically and symbolically constructed, a world full of signs. Therefore, one would be able to interpret the signals, but this could only be accomplished through interaction with other minds in the community. As Peirce stated,

[...] man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man's experience is nothing, if it stands alone [...] It is not 'my' experience that has to be thought of; and this 'us' has indefinite possibilities. (Cited by Colapietro, 1989, p. 122).

This relationship with others is what enables humans to construct meaning and truth, allowing them to share a common consciousness, which is only possible through communication and interaction. Such communication and interaction are made possible by theorization of the own mind and the mind of others, which inevitably results in the connection between the individuality and collectivity of humans (Astington & Baird, 2005). Accordingly, the most fundamental aspect of human nature is its continuous communication with others and the world; what Peirce referred to as semiotic intersubjectivity is currently known as the Theory of Mind in the cognitive sciences. With the discovery of Mirror Neurons, the fundamental theoretical and conceptual tenets of the Theory of Mind became observable and verifiable, almost by serendipity. Di Pellegrino et al. (1992) observed the activation of the ventral premotor cortex in macaques as they were observing actions. The activation of these regions in the macaques without the actual performance of the actions was interpreted as the construction of the minds beyond the individual mind.

Since then, interest in the Mirror Neuron Mechanisms has expanded to include research on humans, who, due to their Theory of Mind, possess the ability to envision and simulate actions for various purposes, such as predicting and explaining the behavior of others (Rivière & Núñez, 2001). Research in Theory of Mind has come to suggest the Theory of Mind Network, comprised of the medial prefrontal cortex, including the dorsomedial and ventromedial portions, the right temporoparietal junction (and to a lesser extent the left), the precuneus, the temporal pole, and the superior temporal sulcus, as demonstrated by research on humans using a variety of tasks and techniques to examine activation areas (Carmona, 2014; Gazzaniga, 2014).

Now, there is a demand to divide the Theory of Mind Network into primary (medial prefrontal cortex, temporoparietal junction) and secondary (precuneus,

temporal pole, and superior right temporal sulcus) processes. The cognitive processes associated with the junction of the temporoparietal lobes are the monitoring of reality's change and the shifting of attention from one's own mental states to those of others. The medial prefrontal cortex, for its part, is associated with abstraction and reflection processes, as well as the construction of distinct temporal-spatial realities. Regarding the secondary areas, the precuneus is responsible for constructing images of past events that also permit projections into the future; the temporal pole appears to play a role in the integration of multimodal information with emotional-visceral responses and the perception of complex stimuli in complex social acts; and finally, the superior temporal sulcus is associated with the perception of biological movements (Carmona, 2014). As can be seen, the individual mind interacts with other minds by focusing on their self-awareness and self-regulation of action in relation to other minds.

### From Alterity to Empathy

Until now, it has been demonstrated that people possess an identity, recognize themselves as beings, and are able to comprehend that their mind is distinct from the minds and identities of others; this argument shows an active emphasis on Peirce's concept of intersubjectivity, which constantly revolves around the need for otherness for self-disclosure, the powerful Self, that is to say, of the interaction of the minds. Peirce highlights the need for otherness, asserting that "when a person finds himself in the society of others, he is just as sure of their existence as of his own, though he may entertain a metaphysical theory that they are all hypostatically the same ego" (Cited by Colapietro, 1989, p. 79). Here, the concept of otherness may refer to the love for truth and humanity in a sort of continuity, a premise that is supplemented by Colapietro (1989), who states that "'Continuity' here implies that the distance between two minds, rather than being the most absolute breach in nature, is the most fordable strap in this domain" (p. 78); such a continuum is possible due to the continuous semiotic and intersubjective flows.

Levinas also manifests that alterity is the starting point for bridging the gap between the Self and others. The central axis of his proposal is the inequality of the relationship's starting point, the position of the vulnerability of the person who interpellates 'me': their *visage* (Levinas, 1982). The instant a subject looks at the *face* of others, it becomes possible to approach them while respecting their freedom and without erasing their uniqueness or alterity (Fernández, 2015). Hence, alterity, as intersubjectivity guaranteed for semiotic and humanistic continuity through interaction, is bolstered by the concept of self-construction, which begins with the presence of others, where the absence of selfishness and

illusory solipsism makes way for interaction and authentic recognition with and from others, thereby fostering the emergence of empathy.

Empathy, the concept naturalized as the evolution of alterity, can be observed at the level of neuronal group activity in the cerebral cortex. The correct operation of empathy also requires the Theory of Mind and the other concepts discussed thus far. Two specific brain regions, the anterior insula, and the anterior cingulate cortex, have been associated with the processing of empathy in humans (Carmona, 2014). These two regions have been identified as those responsible for self-managing emotional states and bodily states and sensations, as demonstrated by studies using neuroimaging techniques, which provided evidence of the constant activation of these regions when people were exposed to painful and non-painful images (Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

### **From Morality to Moral Cognition**

Moral philosophers have always been interested in morality. In fact, two distinct schools of thought are worth mentioning. The first is represented by those who believe that emotions hinder rational thought and moral judgment; as manifested by the Stoics, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche, among others (Wallach, 2010). The second current is represented by those who believe that "emotions play an essential role in life and ethics" (Restrepo et al., 2022, p. 78), Aristotle, Pascal, Hume, and Smith among them (Wallach, 2010). Veritably, "Rousseau, Hutcheson, and Schopenhauer were interested in showing that certain emotions, such as pity, love, and care, lead to moral behavior" (Wallach, 2010, p. 422). In addition, the essential distinction falls upon classical dichotomies such as reason-emotion, theoretical-practical factual world-value issues, objective-subjective, and absolute-relative.

In proximity with the cognitive neurosciences, Churchland (2011) currently supports the thesis of eliminative materialism, in which morality is reduced to the activation and inhibition of neurotransmitters such as oxytocin, serotonin, and vasopressin arginine (and their receptors) involved in a complex social structure where they converge on "care or attention to others; recognition of the psychological states of others; problem-solving in a social context; and learning of social practices" (Estany, 2022a, p. 301). This eliminative position proposes defining morality as "a natural phenomenon: limited by the forces of natural selection, rooted in neurobiology, shaped by local ecology, and modified by cultural developments" (Churchland, 2011, p. 191). Although the position reduces to neurobiology, the author promotes bridging it with social sciences, where culture mobilizes the internalist moral process. Thus, Churchland applies

the naturalization process of morality from a totalitarian instance where the thorough application of empirical norms of natural sciences is imperative.

Early assimilation of current accounts on morality appears to cast aside the traditional dichotomies that separate morality from reason (the philosophical thesis) as empirical evidence converges in the acceptance of the implication of emotions (Damasio et al., 1991; Moll et al., 2008) and social intuitions (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008), and even of dual models of reason and emotion (Greene et al., 2008). At the level of naturalization, there is an abandonment of aprioristic epistemology and an acceptance of neurocognitive methodologies from several theoretical constructs that comprise moral cognition, namely moral judgment (Young & Saxe, 2008) and moral reasoning (Knobe, 2005; Paxton & Greene, 2010). Let us mention Kant's (2005) contribution to *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge since the concepts of moral judgment and moral reasoning in cognitive neurosciences are apparently derived from there, despite the lack of pretension of a categorical imperative (Greene, 2022).

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant specifically breaks down the terms concept, judgment, and reason. The concept (the objects granted to humans as phenomena) is framed by sensitivity and judgment within comprehension (the thought or thought phenomena). As faculties of the human mind, synthetic and analytic judgments are constituted by concepts. Kant (2005) identifies reason (in its logical sense) as the "faculty of the unity of the understanding rules under principles" (p. 220). The preceding assertion suggests that there is a continuum between moral judgment and moral reasoning, both of which are based on concepts of persons. Moral reasoning is "the conscious mental activity through which one evaluates a moral judgment for its (in)consistency with other moral commitments, where these commitments are linked to one or more moral principles and (in some cases) particular moral judgments" (Paxton & Greene, 2010, p. 516).

At first glance, it is apparent that moral cognition (judgment and reasoning) is conceptually close to Theory of Mind (Monasterio, 2020; Knobe, 2005; Knobe & Gendler, 2013; Churchland, 2011); in consequence, a group of authors advocate for a specific field in which the two converge, namely Social Cognition (Astington & Baird, 2005). It has been observed through the application of functional magnetic resonance imaging technologies, that the transversal cognitive constructs for humans in Social Cognition are intentionality and beliefs (Young & Saxe, 2008). The structures and functions of the cerebral cortex implicated in the so-called Moral Reasoning Network are well understood. The Right Temporo-Parietal Junction, Precuneus, and Medial Prefrontal Cortex process moral information at different ages and in distinct contexts, as demonstrated by empirical research (Young et al., 2007; Young & Saxe, 2008). Without question, the neurocognitive

plane of morality is born at the intersection of the morphology of the cerebral cortex, which serves various functions in different regions and networks, resulting in the conscious consideration of moral phenomena. This intersection would provide broad depth in interculturality, allowing moral beliefs, shared value judgments, as well as attention and collaborative action in the intercultural human to emerge and be consolidated.

The sustaining of naturalization of the philosophical concepts in question as basic and necessary constructs for interculturality, results in the proposition of a neurocognitive model as the basis for the human being's interculturality. Consequently, the interconnection of essentially internalist cognitive processes and externalist ones is being accepted as the basis of interculturality. Two particularities arise from there: 1) that the ontological basis of interculturality possesses individual traits, such as subjectivity, and collective traits, such as intersubjectivity; 2) that attention, self-regulation, self-reference memory, Theory of Mind, empathy, and moral cognition are naturalized through the methodological symmetry of cognitive neurosciences (Table 1), which leads them to be contemplated under Cartesian dualism but not under internal-external dualism.

**Table 1.** *Conglomerate of the bases of interculturality.*

Philosophical Unit	Type of Naturalization	Neurocognitive Unit	
		Cognitive Unit	Neurobiological Regions
<b>1. Consciousness</b>	A: Partial replacement. B: Methodological symmetry.	Attention	Global Neuronal Workspace depending on perceptual modality
<b>2. Self-control</b>	A: Partial replacement. B: Methodological symmetry.	Self-regulation (programming, regulation, and verification)	Prefrontal cortex

<b>3. Identity</b>	A: Partial replacement. B: Methodological symmetry. C: Analogy	Self-reference memory	Ventromedial prefrontal cortex and hippocampus
<b>4.The mind (and the social mind)</b>	A: Partial replacement. B: Methodological symmetry.	Theory of Mind	Medial prefrontal cortex (dorsolateral and ventromedial), right temporoparietal junction (and to a lesser extent the left), Precuneus, temporal pole and superior temporal sulcus
<b>5. Alterity</b>	A: Total replacement. B: Methodological symmetry.	Empathy	Anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex
<b>6. Morality</b>	A: Total replacement. B: Methodological symmetry.	Moral Cognition	Right temporo-parietal junction, Precuneus, medial prefrontal cortex

### Brief Presentation of the Model

As for the structure of the model, the genesis of interculturality seems to be attention, which then adheres to self-regulation, which also joins self-reference memory, until it reaches moral cognition. This set structure, except for the genesis, indicates that each subset is a necessary and sufficient neurocognitive construction for interculturality. Such a formulation can be summarized in the following operation: Interculturality (X) is constituted, at the neurocognitive level,



by the integration of the whole of attention, which at the same time is a subset of B, which are subsets of C, which at the very same time are subsets of D, etc. Where A is attention, B is self-regulation, C is the memory of self-reference, D is the Theory of the Mind, E is empathy, and f is moral cognition; be the expression:

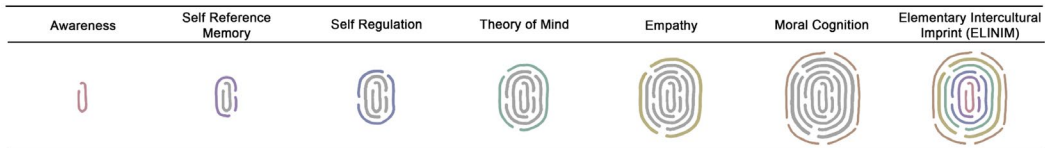
$$\begin{aligned}
 X &= A \subseteq B, \\
 &A \wedge B \subseteq C \\
 &A \wedge B \wedge C \subseteq D \\
 &A \wedge B \wedge C \wedge D \subseteq E \\
 &A \wedge B \wedge C \wedge D \wedge E \subseteq f \\
 &\text{Said otherwise,} \\
 X &= \subseteq (((((A) B) C) D) E) f)
 \end{aligned}$$

**Figure 1.** Model of the logical structure of interculturality.

However, given the social and intersubjective properties of the model, since (inter)culture is not entirely an internal cognitive process and not a completely external one (Han, 2017), it is pertinent to assume the primary metaphoric concept of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), which facilitates finding support on concrete experience to represent the dynamic structure of a model. This simplifies picturing that sets can be defined by neurocognitive structures that are their own but are not hermetic. Genuinely, by assuming that interculturality is the product of the interaction of its sets, a fingertip composed of papillary ridges and interpapillary lines could be projected. This type of fingertip is characteristic of all human beings that have fingers, verified in what is called the fingerprint (an imprint). An imprint, although with the same characteristics (attention, empathy, etc.) varies between people and contexts.

This metaphor of the imprint provides the model with the property of dynamism, so that interculturality depends on the person, who, despite having the same universal characteristics under neurotypical conditions, will diversify the implication, consciously or not, of the neurocognitive constructs that happen to him ( $X = \subseteq (((((A \vee B) \vee C) \vee D) \vee E) \vee f)$ ), mediated all these by his experiences in the cultural niche of which he is an active part, which will be visible in his intercultural action. Additionally, being an elementary model, other ridges and interpapillary lines (neurocognitive structures) can appear as part of the intercultural imprint of people (Figure 2). For now, the model proposed is

the *Elemental Intercultural Imprint* as the dynamic neurocognitive set responsible for the emergence of interculturality in human beings.



**Figure 2.** *Elemental Intercultural Imprint (ELINIM).*

## Conclusions and Projections

As a result of the analysis of the cognitive and neurocognitive dyads as well as the proposal for the model of Elemental Intercultural Imprint, this study affirmatively corroborates the study hypothesis, namely, that the progressive naturalization of consciousness, self-control, identity, social mind, alterity, and morality can reveal the neurocognitive mechanisms of interculturality in people. In this regard, it was found that methodological symmetry with cognitive neurosciences, that is, the adoption of neuroimaging techniques and their respective naturalist correlates, represents a constant form of naturalization of philosophy. For their part, the epistemological replacement and analogy are presented in the naturalization of some concepts but not in all, which also highlights the imperative need for philosophy, without which there would be no possibility of naturalization at all.

Consequently, it can be concluded that interculturality, as an object of study, should be addressed not only through tangible intercultural acts (communicative, corporal, etc.) but also through the basic neurocognitive mechanisms. Therefore, it would be useful to observe the neurocognitive human traits that other authors suggest studying, such as the social and cognitive circularity of interculturality: the loop system (Han & Ma, 2015). For the time being, it is established that the elemental neurocognitive basis of interculturality lies in attention, self-reference memory, self-regulation, Theory of the Mind, alterity, and empathy, which, dynamically and contextually, constitute the Elemental Intercultural Imprint in humans.

All things considered, it seems relevant to mention that human beings can pay attention (in different degrees) to some phenomena that might elucidate their own existential correlate in the here and now, seen in the past and projected in the future, full of volition, which they must self-regulate according to their goals. All of which meets the theorization of their own mind and that of others, against which they must be empathic and co-build the moral foundations that shape the

norms, codes, and values that, later, will define them as culture. It is important to notice the transition from the subjective to the intersubjective because it is precisely that concept that rejects the dichotomy of internalist and externalist cognition by being contemplated as Peircean continuity.

As expected, the study of interculturality under the prism of the Elemental Intercultural Imprint brings great challenges. On the one hand, the degree of involvement of each neurocognitive component remains under discussion because this will depend on the context and the sensory modality used. In addition, the mechanism of methodological symmetry as a naturalizing strategy of preference over the other mechanisms of naturalization remains to be discussed. Another great challenge is overcoming the hegemonic places from which interculturality is often approached, studies circumscribed to WEIRD populations (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) that underestimate the impact of cultural variation on human cognition and bias our understanding of it (Barrett, Stich & Laurence, 2012; Núñez et al., 2019), and perspectives permeated by the dominant voice of certain regions that invisibilize academic contributions constructed from non-WEIRD regions (Barrett, 2020). On the other hand, the characteristics of non-prototypical neurodevelopment, such as ADHD and the Autistic Spectrum Disorder, can guide against the necessary and sufficient neurocognitive properties in the Elemental Intercultural Imprint, so that the debate of modularity, connectionism, and, why not, embodiment may be further explored. Finally, as Han (2017) would consider, the holistic or atomized study of the Elemental Intercultural Imprint seems to have important keys for intercultural communication, peace, and good quality of life.

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# Face Recognition and Cultural Variability: Analysis of Empirical Evidence and Evaluation Measures\*

[English version]

Reconocimiento de rostros y variabilidad cultural. Análisis de la evidencia empírica y las medidas de evaluación

Reconhecimento facial e variabilidade cultural. Análise da evidência empírica e medidas de avaliação

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To review scientific literature in which controlled cognitive tasks and recording of neurological activity are utilized to evaluate face recognition ability, considering the "other-race effect" (ORE). **Methodology:** Reflection article, whose methodology is based on a literature review; 15 studies were included for meta-synthesis. **Results:** It was found that subjective-recollection controlled cognitive tasks, electroencephalography technique, and event-related potentials predominate in face recognition research, considering the ORE. It was also found that oxytocin has no influence on face memory, and that difficulties in recognizing other-race blurred faces correlate with the activation of the fusiform face area (FFA). **Conclusions:** Neural processing of other-race faces requires more effort, evidenced by larger N250 amplitude, and it is related to N170 component. Furthermore, own-race face recognition is prolonged when these are inverted. of Other-race face processing may be increased by instruction, whereas anger does not improve other-race face memory. This review confirms that both neurophysiology and cultural factors play a crucial role in face recognition and suggests that ORE may be produced by the interaction between these factors.

**Keywords:** face recognition; other-race effect (ORE); controlled cognitive tasks; electroencephalography (EEG); cultural neuroscience (obtained from the thesaurus DeCS/MeSH – Health Science Descriptors).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** revisar la literatura científica que utiliza tareas cognitivas controladas y registro de actividad neurológica para evaluar la capacidad para reconocer rostros, considerando el «efecto de la otra raza» (EOR). **Metodología:** artículo de reflexión, cuya metodología parte de una revisión de la literatura; se incluyeron 15 estudios para la meta-síntesis. **Resultados:** se encontró que predominan las tareas cognitivas controladas de recuerdo subjetivo y técnica de electroencefalografía, y potenciales relacionados con eventos en la investigación sobre el reconocimiento de rostros, considerando el EOR. Se halló que la oxitocina no influye en la memoria facial, y que las dificultades en reconocer caras borrosas de otras razas correlacionan con la activación

del área fusiforme facial (AFF). **Conclusiones:** el procesamiento neuronal de rostros de otras razas requiere más esfuerzo, evidenciado por mayor amplitud del componente N250, y relacionado con la N170. Además, invertir rostros de la propia raza prolonga su reconocimiento. La instrucción puede incrementar el procesamiento de caras de otras razas, mientras que la ira no mejora su memoria facial. Esta revisión confirma que tanto la neurofisiología como los factores culturales juegan un papel crucial en el reconocimiento facial, y sugiere que el EOR puede ser un producto de la interacción entre estos factores.

**Palabras clave:** reconocimiento facial; efecto de la otra raza (EOR); tareas cognitivas controladas; electroencefalografía (EEG); neurociencia cultural (obtenidos del tesoro DeCS/MeSH Descriptores en Ciencias de la Salud).

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** rever a literatura científica que utiliza tarefas cognitivas controladas e registro da atividade neurológica para avaliar a capacidade de reconhecer rostos, considerando o "efeito de outra raça" (EOR). **Metodologia:** artigo de reflexão, cuja metodologia parte de uma revisão da literatura; foram incluídos 15 estudos para a metassíntese. **Resultados:** foi descoberto que predominam as tarefas cognitivas controladas de lembrança subjetiva e a técnica de eletroencefalografia, e potenciais relacionados a eventos na pesquisa sobre o reconhecimento de rostos, considerando o EOR. Verificou-se que a oxitocina não influencia a memória facial e que as dificuldades em reconhecer rostos borrados de outras raças correlacionam-se com a ativação da área fusiforme facial (AFF). **Conclusões:** o processamento neuronal de rostos de outras raças requer mais esforço, evidenciado por uma maior amplitude do componente N250 e relacionado ao N170. Além disso, inverter rostos da própria raça prolonga seu reconhecimento. A instrução pode aumentar o processamento de rostos de outras raças, enquanto a raiva não melhora sua memória facial. Esta revisão confirma que tanto a neurofisiologia quanto os fatores culturais desempenham um papel crucial no reconhecimento facial e sugere que o EOR pode ser um produto da interação entre esses fatores.

**Palavras-chave:** reconhecimento facial; efeito de outra raça (EOR); tarefas cognitivas controladas; eletroencefalografia (EEG); neurociência cultural (obtidos do tesoro DeCS/MeSH - Descritores em Ciências da Saúde).

## Introduction

Faces are visual stimuli that convey perceptual and social information (Schwartz et al., 2023; Shoham et al., 2022). Perceptual information is relevant since it allows for facial features recognition; for example, nose size, mouth size or eye color. It also allows for automatic social inferences, which are consistent with the perceived attributes, to be made (Abudarham & Yovel, 2016; Schwartz & Yovel, 2019a, 2019b; Shoham et al., 2022).

Face recognition is a complex neurocognitive process linked to visual processing and social encoding, as well as to the segmentation of perceived facial features and attributes, and the integration of these to construct a coherent and unique representation of a person's face (Blais et al., 2021; Chua et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 2023; Tarr & Gauthier, 2000). Face recognition also involves the identification and representation of specific facial features and their integration into each individual's unique mental model (Blais et al., 2021).

Face recognition and facial expression processing are different, but related, sharing cognitive processes and some brain mechanisms and pathways (Duchaine & Yovel, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2020). The essential difference between them is that face recognition is more associated with registering facial features, while facial expression processing is associated with the interpretation of socio-emotional aspects (Yamamoto et al., 2020).

On the one hand, face recognition begins with the perception of basic facial features, such as shape and texture, which are processed by the primary and secondary visual brain areas. These features are then integrated into a more complex face representation in the inferior temporal cortex (ITC), which includes the fusiform facial area (FFA) (Kanwisher et al., 1997; Kanwisher & Yovel, 2006; Pitcher & Ungerleider, 2021; Sellal, 2022). Finally, this facial representation is compared with mental models stored in memory to identify the person (Haxby et al., 2000; Lopatin et al., 2018).

On the other hand, facial expression processing implies the ability to process social and affective information based on the facial expression (Bigelow et al., 2022; Shoham et al., 2022; Zhen et al., 2013). It involves the activity of the posterior superior temporal sulcus (PSTS) as well as the limbic system (Atkinson & Adolphs, 2011; Duchaine & Yovel, 2015; Haist & Anzures, 2017). In this sense, face recognition and facial expression processing capabilities are essential for the success of social interactions, their modulation, and communication with others throughout life.

In studies with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), three central regions associated with face recognition have been identified in the

occipito-temporal cortex: FFA, PSTS, and the region of the inferior occipital gyrus (IOG) (Gobbini & Haxby, 2007; Karimi-Rouzbahani et al., 2021; Pitcher et al., 2014; Sellal, 2022; Zhen et al., 2013). These three regions constitute the core system for face recognition. The FFA and the PSTS region process distinctive facial features, such as gaze direction, lip movements, and facial expression. The IOG region is responsible for processing invariant aspects that underlie the recognition of individuals (Zhen et al., 2013). Additionally, it has been reported that the amygdaloid nucleus and the insula are involved in the processing of emotional stimuli of facial expressions (Furl et al., 2013; Gobbini & Haxby, 2007; Pitcher et al., 2014; Sellal, 2022).

Zhen et al. (2013) and Sellal (2022) maintain that face recognition is a hierarchical and efficient process that involves multiple neural networks specialized in different aspects of face recognition. The process begins in primary visual areas and progresses to more specialized areas. A main pathway connects the occipital cortex, where the occipital facial area (OFA) is located, to the fusiform facial area (FFA) in the fusiform gyrus, which plays a critical role in recognizing facial identity and its invariant aspects. The second sub-network connects the left middle frontal gyrus (LMFG) and the inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), related to accessing semantic information gleaned from faces; such as a person's name and biographical information (Zhen et al., 2013).

The third sub-network includes regions associated with social facial perception, such as gaze movement and orientation, facial expressions, and lip movements. This network extends from the primary visual cortex to the superior temporal sulcus (STS), and it is known as the third pathway of visual recognition (Sellal, 2022; Pitcher & Ungerleider, 2021; Shoham et al., 2022). It also involves the PSTS, the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), and the insular cortex (IC), which are especially linked to facial expression. Furthermore, additional functional systems, such as the intraparietal sulcus (responsible for the management of spatial attention), the primary auditory cortex (prelexical speech perception), and the limbic system (emotion perception), are connected to the core system of visual processing for face recognition (Sellal, 2022).

The role of the posterior superior temporal sulcus (PSTS) in the processing of visual stimuli linked to movement, facial expressions, and gaze (Pitcher & Ungerleider, 2021; Pitcher et al., 2020; Sliwinska et al., 2020), and in processes that support social cognition, such as intentional attribution and theory of mind (Saxe & Kanwisher, 2003) has been confirmed by several studies. Thus, evidence supports a neurocognitive model oriented to the hierarchical and efficient processing that involves multiple specialized neural networks, in which facial visual processing begins with the identification of basic features and advances to more complex levels of mental representation processing (Haxby et al., 2000;

Zhen et al., 2013; Sellal, 2022). However, several questions remain unanswered about the interaction between these areas and how they are affected by cultural and individual factors.

Research has shown that face recognition is not uniform across cultures and contexts, and that cultural variability can affect how the faces of individuals from different ethnic groups are processed and remembered (Liu et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2007). This has led neuroscientists to explore the effect of cultural variability, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and in-group biases, on facial processing (Hugenberg et al., 2007, 2010; Liu et al., 2019).

This is a clear example is the “other-race effect” (ORE), which describes how people tend to be more accurate at recognizing faces of their own race than those of other races (Meissner & Brigham, 2001). This effect has been documented in recent studies (Schwartz et al., 2023; Stelter & Schweinberger, 2023).

Therefore, studying how cultural factors and individual differences generate a differential effect on the brain areas involved in face recognition including how these differences are integrated into a model that explains the interaction between different processing levels and functional areas (Haxby et al., 2000; Zhen et al., 2013; Sellal, 2022). Furthermore, investigating how these findings can contribute to a better understanding of brain plasticity, and the influence of sociocultural factors on visual processing is necessary. These aspects have important implications for the analysis of cognitive tasks and the value of the techniques that have been used in studies on face recognition, such as event-related potentials (ERPs), fMRI, and EEG.

In accordance with what has been stated so far, conducting a critical analysis of the evidence on the effect of cultural variability on facial processing and the cognitive tasks used in current scientific research is relevant. The objective of this work is to carry out a systematic review of scientific literature on face recognition and ORE, considering the controlled cognitive tasks used in neuroscientific research. In this review, the following aspects will be highlighted: available evidence on the differences in the cognitive and neural processes underlying face recognition according to racial social perception, controlled cognitive tasks, and the neuroimaging methods most commonly used for scientific research.



## Methodology

This is a reflective study, whose methodology is based on a literature review. PRISMA statement criteria were used for study eligibility (Page et al., 2021). The guidelines of this system are widely recognized in the scientific community and are used to ensure transparency and quality in the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Database search process, eligibility criteria, and flow diagram are shown below.

### Search Strategy

Studies were identified by searching electronic databases: Scopus, Springer, and Science Direct. The search was conducted on April 23, 2023, with the following search strategy in English: "face recognition" AND "race" OR "ethnic" OR "culture" AND "eeg" OR "fmri" OR "ERPs". Only articles were chosen, for a total of 246 records. The search was performed by title, summary, and keywords, with no time restriction.

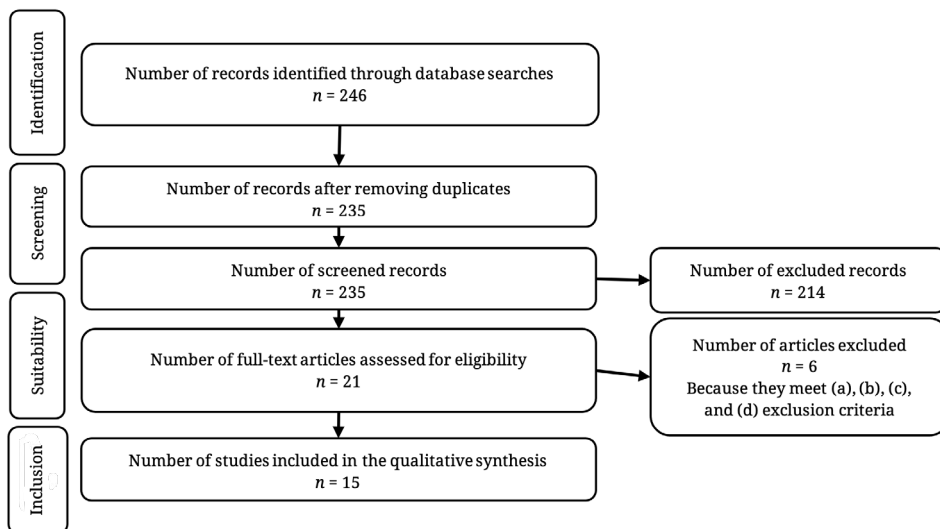
### Eligibility Criteria

Taking into consideration that the objective of this study is to present the available evidence in neurosciences field, and the controlled cognitive tasks that are used to measure the effect of sociocultural factors on face recognition ability, the following inclusion criteria were defined: empirical experimental articles published in the last decade; (a) whose central topic is face recognition in humans and ORE; (b) in which brain functioning measures are used; (c) as well as controlled cognitive tasks. Excluded from this review were articles that: (a) have designs different from experimental research; (b) have a different approach to cultural variability and ORE; (c) are developed in samples with clinical or animal alterations; (d) make no clear presentation of the measurement paradigm of the cognitive task of face recognition; and (e) present no interest in ORE.

### Selection and Data Collection

Each author of this study undertook the articles search in one of the databases and, when the articles to be included were identified, an ad-hoc table was created

for them to register bibliometric information in it. After that, a conceptual identification of the paradigms on face recognition controlled cognitive tasks was carried out by grouping the tasks into categories.



**Figure 1.** *Eligibility Criteria Flow Diagram.*

Note: Studies selection. This diagram represents the study selection process and details of included and excluded articles.

## Ethical Aspects

This sample is documentary due to its systematic review design and poses no risk to humans. Additionally, respect for the sources and authors reviewed herein has been preserved.

## Results

### Controlled Cognitive Tasks to Evaluate Face Recognition and Cultural Variability

In the field of cognitive neuroscience, research on face recognition ability, considering cultural diversity, is a solid and defined research line that focuses

on what was initially called "other-race bias," "cross-race effect" or "other-race effect" (ORE). This phenomenon has traditionally been studied through the use of cognitive task paradigms based on subjective recollection, with a specific focus on the evaluation of memory performance and two subprocesses that compose it: familiarity and recollection in regard to the face (Herzmann et al., 2013; Schwartz et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2021). This methodological framework facilitates the understanding of the nuances and dynamics of cognitive and neural processes involved in face recognition in different intercultural contexts.

Despite showing certain variations, the cognitive tasks applied in this research field generally involve the exposure to faces that are previously unknown to the experimental subject, followed by a learning phase in which a single image per face is presented. Subsequently, in the evaluation phase, these faces must be identified among a set of new distracting images (Tüttenberg & Wiese, 2019). The protocol is completed when participants make remember-know judgments about the viewed or observed faces (Herzmann et al., 2017).

Variations of this paradigm have been designed to examine perceptual and selective attentional processes in more detail, aiming to identify brain regions that are activated during face detection and to determine whether such activation is sensitive to specific facial components (features) or to a holistic representation of the face (configuration) (Zhao et al., 2014). In these adaptations of the paradigm, after each image is presented, the subject must make a judgment about the race of the face that appears in the image. These variants allow for a deeper analysis of cognitive and neural processes underlying face recognition in different cultural contexts.

Most neuroscientific research has explicitly or implicitly integrated a hierarchical explanatory model for facial processing in order to interpret accumulated empirical evidence. This model is based on the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to identify the anatomical substrate corresponding to different hierarchical stages of facial processing, as well as on the use of electroencephalography (EEG), particularly event-related potentials (ERPs), to determine the precise temporality of these processes (Colombatto & McCarthy, 2017).

ERPs represent voltage fluctuations in specific segments of EEG signal, which, after filtering electromuscular activity (for example, that of the masseter and ocular muscles), allow for the visualization of electric fields associated with the activity in clusters of neurons. These fluctuations are manifested as oscillations, which are named based on the direction of the potential change (N1, N2 for negative upward deflections; P1, P2 for positive downward deflections) (Donchin, 1979). These patterns allow for a rigorous and detailed analysis of temporal and spatial dynamics of neural activity during facial processing.

Table 1 shows different functional imaging methods used along with face recognition controlled cognitive tasks in different populations. It also details aspects related to their resolution, application, advantages, and disadvantages.

**Table 1.** *Functional Imaging Methods Used in Face Recognition Controlled Cognitive Tasks.*

<b>Imaging Method</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
EEG	Spatial - Low Temporal - High	Study various rhythms, epilepsy, preoperative mapping, degenerative disorders.	Non-invasive, can perform functional imaging	Low spatial resolution
RMf	Spatial - High Temporal - Low	Preoperative mapping and functional mapping	Non-invasive, can perform functional imaging	High cost

**Adapted from:** *Brain Connectivity Analysis Methods for Better Understanding of Coupling* (Shriram et al., 2012).

In cognitive tasks execution, participants interact with various brain- activity recording technologies. These are selected based on the specific research objectives to identify Regions of Interest (ROI) activation, and to determine the precise moment of occurrence of specific processes. In the field of face recognition studies, ERPs occupy a prominent place, precisely because they have contributed to identifying three components strongly associated with differential perception of faces according to their ethnicity or race: P2, N170, and N400 (Yong et al., 2020). These components provide a detailed view of the temporality and characteristics of neural processing during face recognition, focusing specifically on the response to race/ethnicity-related variations.

Likewise, Table 2 shows the synthesis of studies included in this review, which highlights neurophysiological measures, controlled cognitive tasks and empirical evidence reported on face recognition ability, considering the ORE. Figure 2 shows an analytical synthesis diagram of the results presented herein.

## Empirical Evidence on Face Recognition Considering ORE

**Table 2.** *Empirical Evidence on Face Recognition and ORE.*

Authors (year)	Sample	Neurophysiological Measure	Controlled Cognitive task	Relevant Results
(Herzmann et al., 2013)	52 young adults, half of them male ( $M_{age} = 22.3$ , $SD = 3.1$ ) and the other half female ( $M_{age} = 23.1$ , $SD = 3.4$ ).	EEG recorded with 128-channel <i>Geodesic Sensor Net.</i> ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment Yes/No No = familiar/unfamiliar	Oxytocin did not affect memory for own-race and other-race faces when measured across all participants, nor did it have an effect when measured for females and males separately. Oxytocin did not differentially affect memory for female and male faces. It was shown that familiarity judgments with the faces studied are more accurate after oxytocin administration.
(Zhao et al., 2014)	12 Chinese young adults, half of them females ( $M_{age} = 23.7$ ).	fMRI performed on <i>Philips Achieva 3.0T System.</i>	Identification of repeated presentation.	Differences in own-race and other-race face recognition. Results regarding blurred faces were correlated with differences in FFA activation to those faces, suggesting that the processing configuration within the FFA may underlie the other-race effect in face recognition.

(Herzmann, 2016)	26 Caucasian young adults, 10 females ( $M_{age} = 18$ , $SD = 0.7$ ).	EEG recorded with 32-channel <i>Easy-Cap™</i> . ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment  1-4 recollection degree	Increased N250 amplitudes for other-race faces are taken to represent higher neural demands on the identity-specific processing of other-race faces, which are generally processed less holistically, and less at the individual level.
(Colombatto y McCarthy, 2017)	31 Caucasian adults, 3 of them males ( $M_{age} = 23.67$ , $SD = 4.8$ ).	EEG recorded with 64-channel <i>Neuroscan Quik-Cap</i> . ERPs.	Repetition priming task Identifying race B/W	Recognition of own-race faces takes longer if the face is inverted. Facial inversion revealed processing effects, involving areas of the pericalcarine extrastriate visual cortex and lateral occipito-temporal cortex.
(Herzmann et al., 2017)	22 Caucasian young adults, 73% females ( $M_{age} = 19.1$ with $SD = 1.4$ years) and 12 East Asian (67% females ( $M_{age} = 18.8$ $SD = 1.1$ )).	EEG recorded with <i>Easy-Cap™</i> . ERPs.	Associative-memory task with subjective recollection of encoding moments.  <i>Old / New</i> <i>Old &gt; Blue / Orange</i>	First study with this type of task to evaluate face recognition. During the study phase, subsequently recognized other-race faces (with and without correct background information) elicited more positive mean amplitudes than own-race faces, suggesting higher neural activation during the encoding of other-race faces.
(Wiese y Schweinberger, 2018)	40 Caucasian adults, 20 males ( $M_{age} = 23$ , $SD = 2.7$ ).	EEG con <i>Biosemi Active II System</i> . ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	The own-race bias was accompanied by larger N170 responses to other-race faces, presumably reflecting more effortful perceptual processing of this facial category.

(Herzmann et al., 2018)	36 Caucasian adults, 15 males ( $M_{age}$ 21 SD=2.5).	EEG recorded with 128-channel <i>Geodesic Sensor NetTM</i> . ERPs.	Facial inversion Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment 1-4 recollection degree	First neural evidence that increased holistic processing during memory encoding contributes to the other-race effect in face memory.
(Tüttenberg y Wiese, 2019)	20 Caucasian adults, 10 females ( $M_{age}$ 23.6 SD=5.8).	EEG recorded with 64-channel <i>ANT Neuro System</i> . ERPs.	3 tasks Facial sorting Matching Object detection	Better sorting and matching for own-race than for other-race identities was observed.
(Proverbio et al., 2020)	24 Caucasian adults, 12 males ( $M_{age}$ 23.8, SD=4.23).	128-channel EEG and EOG. ERPs.	Subjective recollection Images of baby faces are included. Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	A baby schema effect on N170, anterior N2, and P300 responses, which were larger to infant than adult faces, regardless of ethnicity.
(Yong et al., 2020)	31 Asian adults, 20 females ( $M_{age}$ 23.18 SD= 3.33).	EEG recorded with 128-channel <i>Geodesic Sensor NetTM</i> . ERPs.	Race identification by eye features: Caucasians/ Asians	A specific facial feature, the eyes region, can account for known effects of race perception on early brain potentials.
(Tüttenberg & Wiese, 2021)	36 Caucasian adults, 26 females ( $M_{age}$ 21.7 SD= 4.1).	EEG recorded with 64-channel <i>ANT Neuro System</i> . ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	Instructions increase analyses for other-race faces, suggesting that more processing resources are allocated to these faces during encoding.

(Anzures & Mildort, 2021)	52 white adults, 29 females ( $M_{age}$ 24.02 SD=2.04).	EEG recorded with 64-channel <i>Brain Vision recorder</i> . ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	Face recognition abilities and their interaction with implicit racial bias modulate the early stages of other-race facial processing.
(Kaciny Herzmann, 2021)	47 young adults, 27 Caucasian, (13 females, $M_{age}$ 19.7 SD= 1.36), 17 African American (13 females, $M_{age}$ 19.8, SD= 1.11).	EEG recorded with <i>Easy-CapTM</i> . ERPs.	Subjective recollection First study with faces showing anger facial expressions to facilitate face recognition. Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	Anger did not improve other-race facial memory in the behavior for either race of participants. It was evidenced that experience with same-race faces, and not stereotypes of other-race facial influences the ORE during memory retrieval.
(Anzures et al., 2022)	18 Caucasian children, 13 females ( $M_{age}$ 6.53 SD= 0.79). 20 Caucasian children, 14 females ( $M_{age}$ 9.27, SD= 0.75), and 20 Caucasian adults, 14 females ( $M_{age}$ 19.74, SD= 1.86).	EEG recorded with 64-channel <i>Brain Vision recorder</i> . (1.21.0303). ERPs.	Subjective recollection Remember-know judgment <i>Old / New</i>	Other-race faces elicited larger P100 amplitudes than own-race faces. Furthermore, adults with better other-race recognition proficiency showed larger P100 amplitude responses, compared to adults with worse other-race recognition proficiency.
(Roth y Reynolds, 2022)	46 10-month-old infants.	EEG recorded with <i>Geodesic Sensor NetTM</i> . ERPs.	First study to analyze familiarization, attention and face recognition in infants.	Infants at this age may process human faces more efficiently when familiarized with a single exemplar.



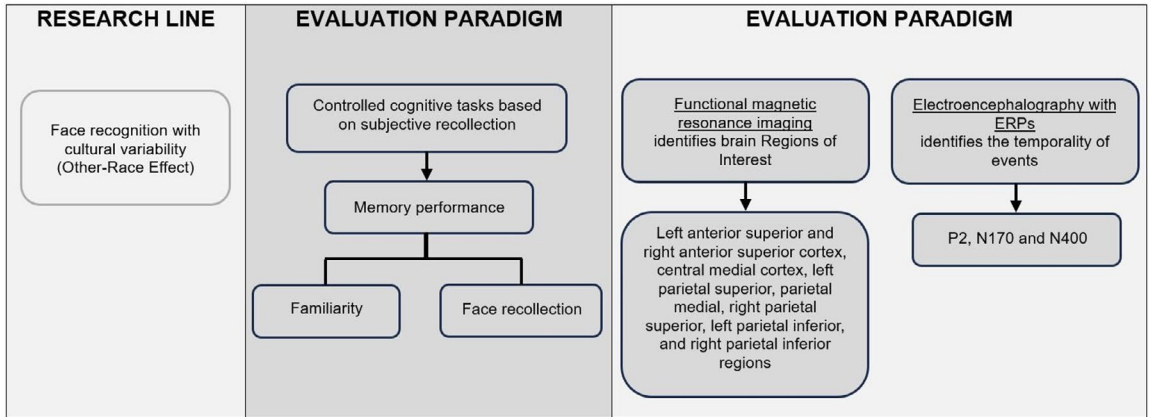


Figure 2. Results Summary Diagram.

## Discussion

The objective of this work was to conduct an intentional critical review of scientific literature on face recognition and ORE, considering the controlled cognitive tasks used in neuroscientific research. Several studies that analyzed the relationship between face recognition and cultural variability of ORE, often using neurophysiological measures and controlled cognitive tasks to explore these processes, were found (Anzures & Mildort, 2021; Anzures et al., 2022; Colombatto & McCarthy, 2017; Herzmann, 2016; Herzmann et al., 2013, 2017, 2018; Kacin & Herzmann, 2021; Proverbio et al., 2020; Roth & Reynolds, 2022; Tüttenberg & Wiese, 2019, 2021; Wiese & Schweinberger, 2018; Yong et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2014).

The face recognition empirical studies reviewed herein, considering ORE, have focused attention on three key aspects. First, the stimuli used, which typically are high-resolution images of Caucasian, East Asian, and African American faces, previously unknown to the participants. Second, the use of specialized devices to record neuronal activity, such as fMRI and EEG with ERPs. The technical details of these devices, from brands and number of channels to data analysis strategies and electrode placement, are carefully described and controlled in these studies. The third element refers to the cognitive task development procedure, including the presentation of the images in blocks or sequences, the collection of participants' responses (generally through key pressing), and the instructions

provided. Additionally, these studies often include additional measuring instruments, such as self-reports.

Controlled cognitive tasks used in face recognition evaluation stand out for the variations in the manipulation of face images used as stimuli, for example, in their orientation by using inverted faces (Colombatto & McCarthy, 2017) and images of the same face from different angles (Tüttenberg & Wiese, 2019). Likewise, variations are observed in their composition, by adding background colors in the encoding phase (Herzmann et al., 2017); in their sharpness, by presenting the images with a blurred effect (Zhao et al., 2014); in their structure, by showing only some facial features (Yong et al., 2020); or by adding facial expressions through faces with emotions such as anger (Kacin & Herzmann, 2021).

As distinctive characteristics presented in the sample section, the importance of reporting brain damage as well as the hand dominance of participants in the selection, indicating the differentiated execution precision in the use of computer keyboards in cognitive tasks, due to the effects of motor skills in neural measures recording, was observed in these studies (Colombatto & McCarthy, 2017; Herzmann, 2016; Herzmann et al., 2017; Kacin & Herzmann, 2021). This attention to detail reinforces the reliability and validity of the conclusions derived from these studies, reflecting the complexity of the neural and cultural processes involved in face recognition.

Neurophysiological research has shown a complex interrelationship of factors that influence face recognition when considering aspects such as ORE. In this regard, Herzmann et al. (2013) found that oxytocin did not differentially affect memory for other-race faces nor for male or female faces. Zhao et al. (2014) identified differences in brain activation related to own-race and other-race faces recognition. These studies laid the foundations for the work of Herzmann (2016), and that of Colombatto and McCarthy (2017), who showed that identity-specific processing and facial orientation are crucial in other-race face perception. For their part, Wiese and Schweinberger (2018) delved into these findings, demonstrating that neural responses can vary depending on the race of the perceived face.

Studies with EEG and ERPs indicated that neural response variations derived from other-race facial perception are concentrated especially in the left anterior superior and right anterior superior cortex, central medial cortex, left parietal superior, parietal medial, right parietal superior, left parietal inferior, and right parietal inferior regions. Recording neural activity in these areas has revealed that the frequencies that are most associated with the advantage in own-race face recognition, compared to that of other-race faces, are found in the N170, P2, and N400 potentials (Wiese & Schweinberger, 2018; Yong et al., 2020). From these, voltage maps based on difference waves in potentials that are evoked by visual stimulus between subsequent memory judgements, can be

obtained. These maps show a window of between 500 and 900 ms for own-race and other-race facial recollection (Herzmann et al., 2018).

N170 is an ERPs recorded during face encoding between 150 and 190 ms. N170 is also a face-specific response that reflects processing of face schemata (Proverbio et al., 2020). P2, for its part, is usually related to early attentional processes that are often considered automatic, and which may reflect the activity of an early vigilance system dedicated to the detection of threat-related stimuli (Yong et al., 2020). Enlarged P200 responses reflect forceful processing that would elicit greater feedback from higher to lower visual areas (Anzures & Mildort, 2021). N400, recorded in 300–500 ms time window, measures facial familiarity processes; while the subsequent 500–800 ms recording reflects recollection processes (Herzmann et al., 2018; Rugg & Curran, 2007).

The study by Tüttenberg and Wiese (2019) showed that more processing resources tend to be allocated to own-race faces, resulting in better face sorting and recognition. These findings suggest learning advantages for own-race identities, and underscore the importance of perceptual experience in own-race bias. Furthermore, these findings are in agreement with what was reported by Herzmann et al. (2018), who noted that increased manipulations of holistic processing influence memory encoding for own-race compared to other-race faces. Studies in younger populations, such as that of Anzures et al. (2022), and that of Roth and Reynolds (2022), have added similar and complementary data by showing that children and infants show variations in other-race face perception.

The influence of neurophysiological and sociocultural factors interaction on face recognition is evidenced by the meticulous attention to stimuli, methodology, and demographic considerations in the studies reviewed herein (Anzures & Mildort, 2021; Anzures et al., 2022; Colombatto & McCarthy, 2017; Herzmann, 2016; Herzmann et al., 2013, 2017, 2018; Kacin & Herzmann, 2021; Proverbio et al., 2020; Roth & Reynolds, 2022; Tüttenberg & Wiese, 2019, 2021; Wiese & Schweinberger, 2018; Yong et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2014). The relevance of ORE in neuroscience research is highlighted by these studies, which support the idea that differences in race perception can shape face recognition ability (Anzures et al., 2013; Ge et al., 2009; Kelly et al., 2007; Meissner & Brigham, 2001; Sangrigoli & de Schonen, 2004), and provide an interdisciplinary study perspective to analyze functional connectivity mechanisms for facial processing from a cross-cultural perspective (Wong et al., 2020).

Likewise, ORE has been shown to develop early during childhood (Anzures et al., 2022; Kelly et al., 2007; Roth & Reynolds, 2022; Sangrigoli & de Schonen, 2004), and is associated with limited exposure to other-race faces during critical development periods. This is due to the fact that, from birth, children have greater exposure to people belonging to their ethnic or racial in-group. Consequently, they

develop a greater ability to identify and process the features and expressions of own-race faces, in addition to showing a preference for them compared to other-race faces (Bar-Haim et al., 2006; Hugenberg et al., 2007, 2010; Kelly et al., 2007).

According to the categorization-individuation model of the ORE (Hugenberg et al., 2007), in-group and out-group faces are attended in qualitatively different ways. In this regard, Prunty et al. (2023) maintain that identity-relevant features are attended more readily for in-group faces. This results in better performance in recognition memory tasks, while category-linked features are preferentially attended to in out-group faces, leading to faster categorization during search tasks. This results in an improved performance in recognition memory tasks, while category-related features are preferentially attended for out-group faces, which leads to an improved categorization speed in search tasks.

As children grow older, this preference becomes more pronounced, suggesting sociocognitive attitudes of implicit racial bias (Lebrecht et al., 2009). Early and frequent exposure to own-race faces promotes ORE during development (Anzures et al., 2013, 2022; Kelly et al., 2007). Factors such as intergroup contact, social exposure, formation of social stereotypes and in-group biases can strengthen the implicit racial biases of other-race face recognition (Anzures et al., 2022; Ge et al., 2009; Prunty et al., 2023). In this regard, Lebrecht et al. (2009) showed that perceptual other-race training (Caucasian people exposed to African American faces) reduced implicit racial bias, demonstrating its causal link with ORE. This effect has also been demonstrated in preschool children (Qian et al., 2019).

The above demonstrates the influence of exposure to specific sociocultural environments on neurocognitive processing of faces. These findings are consistent with what was reported in several of the studies in this review. Zhao et al. (2014) found a correlation between differences in FFA activation and recognition of other-race blurred faces, suggesting a neural basis of ORE. Herzmann (2016) observed that the presence of N250 amplitudes, increased for other-race faces, could indicate increased neural demands for identity-specific processing. This idea was supported by Wiese and Schweinberger (2018) as well as by Tüttenberg and Wiese (2021), who reported larger N170 responses for other-race faces, and an increase in analyzes for these faces due to specific instructions.

For their part, Colombatto and McCarthy (2017) and Herzmann et al. (2018) noted that recognition of own-race faces is slower when they are inverted, implying that increased holistic processing during memory encoding may contribute to ORE. Tüttenberg and Wiese (2019), as well as Anzures and Mildort (2021) expanded this finding by considering that high recognition abilities for own-race compared to other-race faces and identities are related to implicit racial biases.

Finally, Anzures et al. (2022) provided evidence indicating that other-race facial perception generates larger P100 amplitudes than that of own-race faces; aspects that are associated with perceptual categorization processes and social perception.

Additional studies show that people have better face recognition memory for own-race compared to other-race faces (Liu et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). Visual categorization of faces based on group membership (in this case, race) is thought to be a key component explaining changes in facial cognitive processing according to cultural membership (Hugenberg et al., 2010; Prunty et al., 2023). These findings have important implications for understanding the neuroscience of face processing in humans.

Data show that visual processing of faces can vary according to particular sociocultural exposure, which is associated with ORE. However, that there are universal neural mechanisms underlying face recognition (Blais et al., 2021; Caldara et al., 2010; Sellal, 2022; Zhen et al., 2013). This is consistent with previous studies where specific brain areas have been identified, such as the fusiform face area (FFA) and the Occipito-Temporal Sulcus (OTS) area, which are involved in other-race facial processing (Kanwisher et al., 1997; Karimi-Rouzbahani et al., 2021; Gauthier et al., 1999; Pitcher & Ungerleider, 2021; Sellal, 2022; Walker et al., 2008; Zhao et al., 2014).

Finally, ORE relates to cultural differences in visual information distribution and focus. It contributes to understanding how other-race faces are processed and perceived. These differences may have implications for how the neural mechanisms underlying face recognition adapt and adjust based on experience and cultural environment.

## Conclusions

Studies on face recognition and ORE have used variations of cognitive tasks, which are controlled for measuring facial memory with EEG with ERPs preferential neurophysiological recording, which show greater interest in discovering process phases after having a solid theoretical foundation of ROI in FFA and OTS thanks to fMRI. These variations usually focus on stimuli presentation. Furthermore, neurophysiological activity recording focuses predominantly on the P100, N170, P2, and N400 potentials. In general, studies indicate better own-race than other-race face recognition.

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COGNITIVE SCIENCES:  
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# Inclusive Higher Education. A Review using *Tree of Science*\*

[Version in English]

Educación superior inclusiva. Una revisión usando *Tree of Science*

Ensino superior inclusivo. Uma revisão usando *Tree of Science*

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This article aims at identifying the main contributions, gaps, and trends around inclusive practices in higher education. **Methodology:** A search in Scopus and the Tree of Science (ToS) algorithm was conducted to identify articles in the

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root, trunk, and branches. **Results:** The results revealed three subfields within the review of scientific production related to inclusive higher education: 1) aspects that influence the consolidation of more inclusive education; 2) inclusion of students with disabilities between barriers and opportunities; and 3) implications for consolidating more inclusive higher education practices. **Conclusions:** It is concluded that there is a need to generate more space for training and formation on the understanding of inclusive education and practices.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, higher education, pedagogical practice, barriers, diversity (from UNESCO thesaurus).

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** en este artículo se busca identificar los principales aportes, vacíos y tendencias en torno a las prácticas inclusivas en la educación superior. **Metodología:** se realizó una búsqueda en Scopus y se aplicó el algoritmo de Tree of Science (ToS) para identificar los artículos en la raíz, tronco y ramas. **Resultados:** los resultados mostraron tres subcampos emergentes en la revisión de la producción científica en relación con la educación superior inclusiva: 1) los factores que influyen en la consolidación de una educación más inclusiva, 2) la inclusión de estudiantes con discapacidad: entre barreras y oportunidades, y 3) las implicaciones para la consolidación de prácticas de educación superior más inclusivas. **Conclusiones:** a partir de los estudios revisados, se concluye la necesidad de generar más espacios de capacitación y formación sobre las comprensiones de la educación inclusiva y las prácticas que de ellas se derivan.

**Palabras clave:** educación inclusiva; educación superior; práctica pedagógica; barreras; diversidad (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).



## Resumo

**Objetivo:** este artigo busca identificar as principais contribuições, lacunas e tendências das práticas inclusivas no ensino superior. **Metodologia:** foi realizada uma pesquisa no Scopus e o algoritmo Tree of Science (ToS) foi aplicado para identificar artigos na raiz, no tronco e nos ramos. **Resultados:** os resultados mostraram três subcampos emergentes na revisão da produção científica em relação ao ensino superior inclusivo: 1) fatores que influenciam a consolidação de um ensino mais inclusivo, 2) a inclusão de alunos com deficiência: entre barreiras e oportunidades, e 3) implicações para a consolidação de práticas de ensino superior mais inclusivas. **Conclusões:** com base nos estudos revisados, conclui-se a necessidade de criar mais espaços de capacitação e formação sobre as compreensões da educação inclusiva e as práticas decorrentes delas.

**Palavras-chave:** educação inclusiva; educação superior; prática pedagógica; barreiras; diversidade (obtidas do tesouro da UNESCO).

## Introduction

Discourses on inclusive education have been on the public agenda since 1990, with the “Global Declaration on Education for All” held in Jomtien, Thailand (Unesco, 1990). The conceptual transitions from that time to the present have been significant; among the main paradigm breakdowns, there is a change in the perspective of addressing differences. The approach moves from an integrative proposal to another on “some others” historically excluded, whom are required to be adapted and adjusted to become part of educational organizations, into a trend that focuses on how these institutions, conceived from the ideology of normality, have set up barriers that limit access, learning, and participation of individuals for whom they were not originally intended. The effective materialization of inclusive educational processes demands three main components: practices, policies, and cultures. Hence, there is a need to know the deployment of these components in recent years in higher education through a systematic analysis.

Changes related to these discourses have been significant in basic and secondary education, leading to their incorporation into educational policies that transform relations, didactics, and pedagogical practices at these educational levels. However, its influence in the field of higher education has been less important, given the competitive and meritocratic nature of university education in the international context.

In this sense, while universality has been promoted in basic education, it has been veiledly established in higher education that it applies only to a few, those considered to be “the most capable.” In connection with this, Mareño (2021) states that the demand for productivity, excellence, and individual talent has generated in higher education a culture of ableism (p. 37, own translation), that is, a culture focused on the imperative of normality inherent in our societies.

In inclusive education, Slee (2012) recognizes a complex set of influences that contribute to its establishment as a field of study, but the review of scientific production shows a tendency to associate it with the education of people with disabilities, perhaps because, as a society, it has difficulties transforming our understanding of human differences apart from the normal-abnormal dichotomy. In this regard, research trends respond to an inclusion perspective related to neoliberal inclusionism (Waitoller et al., 2019) that promotes practices of selective or exclusive inclusion (Veiga-Neto & Lopes, 2011).

Therefore, this article emerges from the need to approach a systematic review of the phenomenon of inclusive higher education from the perspective of recent scientific production. We searched Scopus using the formula “inclusive education” AND “higher education” and found 471 articles. They were organized

by the algorithm of the ToS (Tree of Science) (Robledo et al., 2022) to determine the most important subfields of research on inclusion in higher education. This process enabled the recognition of the most important conceptual advances to explain the role of inclusive perspectives in higher education, from early contributions to the most recent findings.

In three general ways, the scientific literature has addressed the phenomenon of inclusive higher education. Internal and external issues, particularly those affecting the disabled population, influence the consolidation of inclusive processes in the first subfield. A second subfield describes the disabilities associated with physical and architectural, attitude, pedagogical, and didactic barriers identified by students. Finally, some research highlights the need for inclusive training for professors and the use of ICT as a means of flexible educational processes, as they are essential to advancing the transformation of higher education systems from a more inclusive perspective.

## Methodology

A systematic review of literature implies to collect, organize, evaluate, and synthesize available support on a subject of interest to identify topics of understanding, gaps and trends on a particular subject of study. For the literature review, the search equation “inclusive education” and “higher education” was used in Scopus to identify the most important papers on inclusion in higher education. It was established that concepts could be implicit in the title, keywords or abstracts, thus 471 articles were under study. After that, the web platform ToS (Tree of Science)—a tool designed to facilitate the search of literature by an algorithm SAP and a theory of graphs (Robledo et al., 2022)—was used to identify the most relevant papers on the object of study through the analysis of citation networks, and to identify three essential aspects that metaphorically can be associated with the tree (root, trunk, and branches).

ToS provides a graph that reflects the importance of an article, according to the number of citations and publishing dates (Zuluaga et al., 2022). From this classification, it is possible to place at the root the articles that start the understanding of the object of study and based the theory as the ones of greatest citation; in the trunk, the structuring articles fulfill a double purpose: To cite and to be cited; and, finally, in the branches, the most recent studies and their comprehensive approaches. They are also the articles in which the most citations are made. The search on ToS allowed the identification of 10 articles

in the root, 31 in the trunk, and three in the branches for a total of 34 articles, as Figure 1 shows.

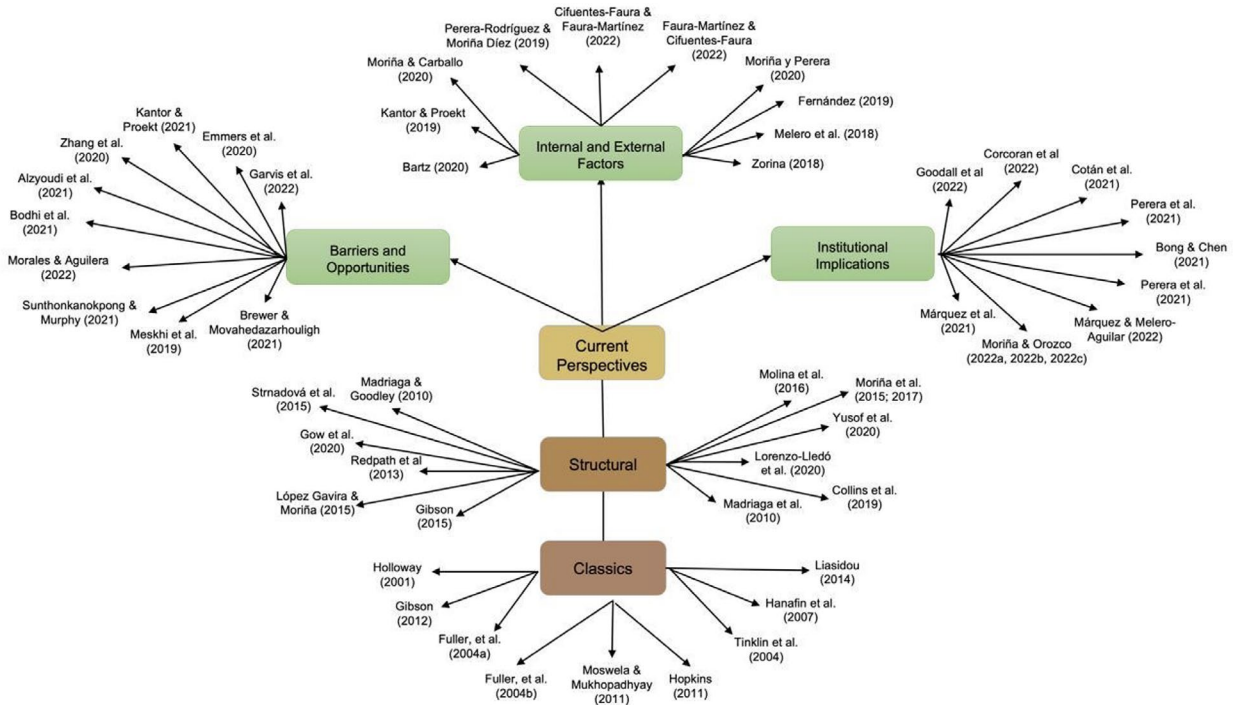
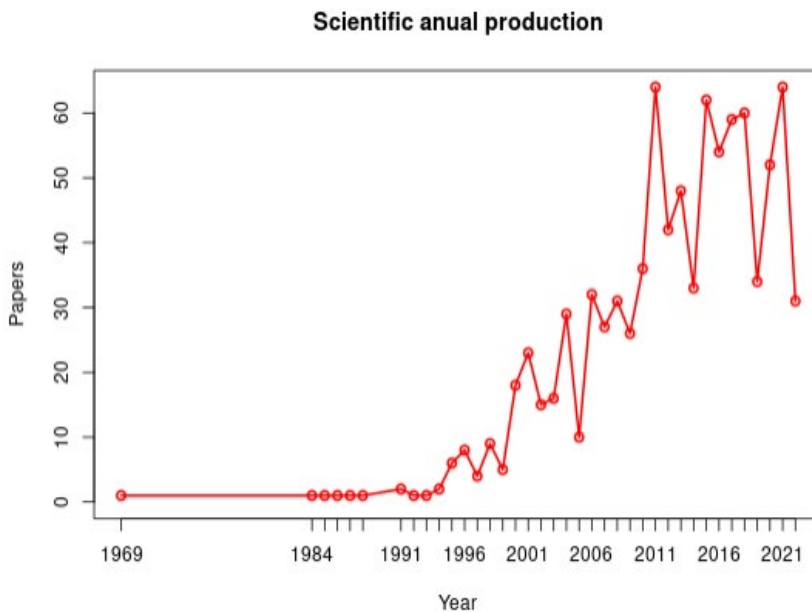


Figure 1. Tree of Science in Inclusive Higher Education.

After the selection of these papers, data was systematized through a matrix that enabled the identification of key aspects, such as abstracts, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusions. This enabled a comprehensive understanding of how the processes of inclusion in higher education have been from different contexts, barriers, experiences of actors and challenges. The next step was to analyze the main aspects to identify the most relevant elements. This analysis was framed into a historical approach around the processes of inclusion in higher education to reveal different topics of understanding, tensions, and trends.

## Results

Figure 2 shows the number of articles published per year in Scopus. It was found that between 2010 and 2021 the scientific production in relation to the phenomenon of inclusive higher education had a significant growth, from 35 to more than 60 articles. It shows the importance and position of the phenomenon on the international floor over the last decade.



**Figure 2.** Annual scientific production.

Source: ToS (2022).

In relation to the authors, Table 1 shows the most referenced articles. Moriña from Spain is the most recurrent author (31 articles), followed by authors Ainscow (11 articles) and Slee (9 articles) from the United Kingdom.

**Table 1.** Authors by number of references.

Author	Freq.	Country
Moriña, Anabel	31	Spain
Ainscow, Mel	11	United Kingdom
Slee, Roger	9	United Kingdom
Leyser, Yona	7	United States
Sharma, Umesh	7	Australia
Florian, Lani.	6	United Kingdom
Moliner, Odet.	5	Spain
Avramidis, Elias	4	Greece
Burgstahler, Sheryl	4	United States
Lipka, Orly	4	Israel

Referring back to the tree metaphor, we present the main findings below, taking into account their position within the tree (root, trunk, or branches). This enables us to comprehend the various viewpoints that approach inclusive higher education.

### **Root: Theoretical Foundations for Understanding Inclusive Higher Education**

50% of the research placed in the root was conducted between 2001 and 2012. It focused on disability and the barriers students face in higher education, mainly from individual experiences. In this regard, Holloway (2001), explored the university's significant documentation to identify the aspects that enable a

positive experience for students with disabilities, as well as those that lead to discriminatory and marginalizing practices.

One of the first systematic analyses of students' experiences with disabilities in higher education was focused on learning barriers (Fuller et al.) (2004). The research presents statistical data on the quality and variety of learning experience, assessments of conditions associated with learning and evaluation of 173 students. Among the main findings, there is a need to pay more attention to issues related to parity and provision flexibility, and also to the staff capacity to identify and design reasonable adjustments according to recent disability legislation. Gibson (2012) focused especially on the learning experiences of first-year students with disabilities, their transitions from school to university, and positive and negative learning experiences at both levels.

The struggle of students with disabilities to access and participate in higher education remains a major concern for disability activists and researchers Moswela and Mukhopadhyay (2011). They registered the experiences of university students with disabilities in their struggle to access and participate in higher education, and reported their findings into six topics: Attitude, resource, structural barriers, policy-related issues, lack of support mechanisms, and lack of skills and knowledge. Hopkins (2011) also highlights this issue through the exploration of the narratives of students with disabilities and the barriers they face when trying to access curricula in tertiary education. These narratives state that they have to work harder than non-disabled students to overcome a wide range of physical, attitude, social, cultural and political barriers.

The understanding from the perspective of the rights of individuals with disabilities is another topic of research. Tinklin et al. (2004) discussed the state of policy for this population in higher education in Scotland and England. The researchers conclude that while there were definitive signs of progress in the development of students with disabilities, some areas need more attention, such as the need to challenge conventional notions of effective teaching and learning practices. Hanafin et al. (2007) argued that in the European context, the facilitation of more participation of historically marginalized groups has become a cornerstone of social policy. This approach has tended to focus on physical access and some technical support; however, the access is multifaceted and should include a review of pedagogical practices, as well as technological and personnel assistance.

The last approach, poorly explored, has been focused on critical studies on disability, since historically disability has been excluded from these analyses merely in the field of abnormality and individual pathology. Liasidou (2014) addresses some ideas from critical studies of disability to highlight the significance of

adopting the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to mobilize socially fair changes in higher education.

While it is true that Ground-based studies show progress on building a public policy around the process of inclusive education, progress is still needed to advance in infrastructure adaptation to ensure access and participation for all. As well as making adjustments at the pedagogical level, especially in curriculum design and evaluation systems, to provide quality at the end of an educational process. It is only in 2014 that the research turns to highlighting how certain dimensions of a social justice discourse should be included in a public policy discussion on inclusion and promote greater participation of students with disabilities in higher education (Liasidou, 2014).

### **Trunk: Structuring Understandings of Inclusive Higher Education**

The structural analysis identified four main topics. The first one was focused on research from the voices of the actors on different ways to improve inclusion practices in higher education. The first reference was Redpath et al. (2013), who analyzed students' perceptions about current services and barriers and provided suggestions for improving them. The research suggests a communication network to foster dialogue among actors to favor the student, as the core of these discussions, and to remark the importance in the long term of the objective of the institutions from the logic of the individual "reasonable adjustments" to move towards inclusive education for all. Strnadová et al. (2015) analyzed the types of support referred by students, including the role of the family, peers, and attendants. Participants also shared strategies to deal with their barriers and highlighted assertiveness, self-determination, and metacognition.

The second axis of understanding addresses research that goes beyond the perspective of rights. Gibson (2015) and Madrid and Goodley (2010) in the UK, Moriña et al. (2017) in Spain, and Gow et al. (2020) in South Africa emphasize the need for higher education to fill the gaps between the policy and its implementation for students with disabilities. Also, on the importance of problematizing the rights of public policies to reflect on the complexities and conflicts of inclusion and the design of a proposal on new pedagogical developments with a critical view on the impact of hegemony and the silenced voices of this people.

The third axis focuses on subjects, especially professors of higher education and students with disabilities, through a narrative-biographical methodological approach. Moriña et al. (2015) present the recommendations of 44 university



students with disabilities, not only for adequate training of the professors but also to know about the disability itself and the ways to respond to the needs. Molina et al. (2016) analyze how professors respond to students with disabilities, identify barriers, and provide support that influence access, academic performance, and perceptions of their experiences in higher education. From this perspective, Lorenzo-Lledó et al. (2020) analyze the implementation of inclusive methodologies in university students with disabilities from the teaching posture. According to the professional category and their branch of knowledge, there are significant differences in perceptions.

A final topic focuses on research that emphasizes the challenges of higher education, where collegiate action and networking must be guarantees for the processes of transformation and flexibility that are required, in such a way that welcoming educational environments can be managed to facilitate the deployment of the capacities of each subject. From this perspective, Moriña (2017) and Madriaga et al. (2010) state the need to reflect on how the university should transit towards an inclusive scenario that demands the design of policies, strategies, processes, and practices to consolidate a culture aimed at involving people within the framework of an education for all.

Despite significant progress towards inclusive education through reasonable adjustments for all, Collins et al. (2019) contend that the adaptation of learning settings for individual students presents both organizational and personal challenges. Four main challenges were identified: (1) staff perception of resources that create too much dependence on students; (2) staff training needs; (3) low representation of students with visible disabilities; and (4) the need for inclusion beyond education to employment.

## **Branches: Inclusive Higher Education's Comprehensive Emergencies**

Between 2018 and 2022, 30 papers from 332 articles on the branches appeared. We can group the most recent studies into three distinct trends. They allow us to go deeper into the tensions and compressions of inclusive higher education; in this way, both internal and external factors affect the consolidation of inclusive processes.

The first trend explicitly refers to the disabled population and reflects on the possibilities of inclusive education. The second refers to the barriers identified by students with disabilities associated with higher education. In this regard,

it relates to three main aspects: physical and architectural barriers, professors' attitudes, and pedagogical and didactic barriers. Finally, some research attempted to break the connection between inclusive education and disability. On the one hand, they introduce aspects related to social justice, the training of inclusive professors, and the use of ICTs as a mediation in flexible educational processes; on the other hand, they analyze factors to be considered in the consolidation of higher education institutions that move towards inclusive processes.

### **Influential Factors on the Consolidation of More Inclusive Education.**

In the first branch, there are studies that approach to internal factors (attitudes, perceptions, concerns, qualities, conditions, among others) and external factors (environment, culture, policies, practices) that influence the possibility of achieving more inclusive educational processes. They establish a direct relationship between the concept of inclusive education and the education of the population with disabilities.

The first article of this branch shows a positive connection between the attitude of professors, the university environment, and spirituality (as an orientation of social altruistic value) to incorporate inclusive education into the context of India (Bodhi et al. 2021). It has some practical implications to emphasize the intention of inclusion. The educational organization must look for alternatives to influence the consolidation of a convenient attitude of professors towards inclusive education. Alzyoudi et al. (2021) analyze the attitudes of students called "typical development" in relation to their disabled fellows in the context of the United Arab Emirates. They identify negative attitudes that are justified from the requirement of university education that would directly affect the intentions of socialization and interaction towards this population. According to the findings, the knowledge of inclusive education policies does not positively influence these perceptions. In this way, there is a need to generate measures to promote the change of perceptions and to get more acceptance; thus, training processes are proposed in relation to inclusive education and the importance for the consolidation of more inclusive societies.

Morales and Aguilera (2022) point out the need to identify the perceptions of students with disabilities, professors, and managers towards inclusive education processes to identify barriers and their facilitators. Garvis et al. (2022) refer to the teachers training of early childhood in the Swedish university context, it establishes the importance of knowing the beliefs of training teachers on inclusive education. Sunthonkanokpong and Murphy (2021) analyze the concerns of teachers in training about the inclusion of students they call "diverse" in their

classrooms; they focus mainly on the lack of resources and the work with disabled populations. They also highlight the lack of research on teaching training in contexts of diversity.

Brewer and Movahedazarhouligh (2021) present the experiences of students with intellectual disabilities and their development in post-secondary education. They refer to these new opportunities in university contexts through the discourse of inclusive education. They state the importance of knowing the experiences of these students to identify barriers, challenges, strengths and needs of such programs and generate transformation processes.

Another aspect of understanding has to do with the mobilizations associated with the practices for the approach to inclusive educational processes. In this regard, Kantor and Proekt (2021) identify that while university professors have motivational or emotional preparation for the development of a more inclusive education, the lack of practical skills becomes a barrier to the implementation, and generates resistance and rejection. They also recognize a greater inclusion of social and humanities professors in contrast to natural and exact sciences professors. As a result, they propose a model of psychological preparation of university professors for the implementation of inclusive education including a motivational-valorative component, an emotional and a practical component. Similarly, Emmers et al. (2020) study the relationship between professors' attitudes, self-effectiveness, and behavior toward inclusive higher education. They state the importance of policy reforms, focusing on the need for the practical experience of professors in training to develop procedural skills for inclusive educational processes.

Some research insists on the need to consider the fundamental skills of a professor to respond to diversity in inclusive education; others state the importance of technological mediation as an opportunity for the diversification of teaching in higher education. Zhang et al. (2020) argue that most traditional models of higher education are not adequately adapted to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities, and they recognize in blended learning the potential for consolidating inclusive education systems that are flexible and adjusted to learning opportunities. Meskhi et al. (2019) analyze the limitations and opportunities for the development of e-learning in the inclusive education system in Russian universities and recognize flexibility as a condition to ensure access, learning, and participation of different population groups that otherwise would not have access.

## **Inclusion of Students with Disabilities: Between Barriers and Opportunities.**

The studies in this branch acknowledge the importance of understanding the educational realities of the disabled population in a university context. Bartz (2020) highlights the socio-economic inequality this population faces in higher education, especially their needs for complementary care by the health system, as they are limited in the time and cost they demand. The author also emphasizes the importance of addressing the architectural barriers in institutions as well as barriers to the spatialization of educational sets as aspects that interfere with learning. A third aspect is the learning resource, since, although in many cases, the institutions have educational platforms to support teaching processes, few professors carefully select the learning resources and analyze accessibility conditions. This latter aspect is also studied by Perera-Rod and Moriña (2019) in relation to the support and obstacles of new technologies in the education and academic lives of university students with disabilities, as well as the need for training professors for their pedagogical use.

Several authors identified professors' attitudes as an obstacle to promoting the learning and participation of students with disabilities; thus, they highlight the need for further training and the development of inclusive teaching methods. Furthermore, the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is suggested as an alternative to thinking of more flexible, relevant, and accessible curricula (Bartz, 2020; Moriña & Perera, 2020; Moriña & Carballo, 2020; Melero et al., 2018).

Moriña and Carballo (2020), Fernández (2019), and Melero et al. (2018) analyze, from the perspective of students with disabilities, different facilitators and obstacles from their own experiences and call for institutionality and transformations for the university towards a more inclusive education. Moriña and Carballo (2020) refer to the need for accessibility of university settings, planned transition processes, work orientation services, positive attitude of professors, development of inclusive practices, use of technologies, and the need to train professors on inclusion and disability. Melero et al. (2018) reinforce these findings through the life stories of students with disabilities. They refer to the main barriers during their university study: physical barriers and the ones associated with professors.

Zorina (2018) presents different strategies for eradicating barriers to education in Russian universities. The author proposes a methodology for their sustainable elimination and refers to an inclusive infrastructure for training, communication, and socialization. It is also stated that there is a need to ensure full academic access to high-quality education through educational programs adjusted to the needs of the population, including psychological and pedagogical support. And remarks on the importance of removing attitude barriers to promote

actions to facilitate socialization and interaction among differences. Kantor and Proekt (2019) identify the lack of willingness of peers to study with people with disabilities, the significant communication difficulties, the limitations for teaching organization due to heterogeneous groups, and the lack of knowledge, mediation, and educational resources for such processes.

Finally, Faura-Martínez and Cifuentes-Faura (2022), and Cifuentes-Faura and Faura-Martínez (2022) propose an instrument to evaluate the state of inclusive education in each university and to know the degree of curricular suitability and accessibility, as well as the resources and inclusion projects. This will allow us to classify institutions according to progress in inclusive education, especially in terms of the quality of specific measures to help students with disabilities or other special needs.

### **Implications for Consolidating More Inclusive Practices in Higher Education.**

This latter branch enables an approach to those dimensions of higher education that need to be considered to move towards inclusive educational processes. On this basis, it is possible to identify at least four trends: the need to think about timely, relevant, and harmonious transformations between higher education and the workplace about social justice; the use of technology as a powerful mediator in the processes of universal access to curricula; the need to train professors with an inclusive profile for changes in educational practices; and, finally, the general conditions to consolidate inclusive higher education institutions.

Goodall et al. (2022) and Corcoran et al. (2022) refer to the need to think more comprehensively about the inclusive perspective, not limited to educational settings, and consider aspects related to the transition of employment and equal opportunities. Goodall et al. (2022) state that much remains to be done in the creation of inclusive education and employment settings; they point out the need for dissemination and training processes for staff in both fields. Corcoran et al. (2022) assert that measuring inclusive education solely by enrolment is no longer sufficient, as it is crucial for ensuring study opportunities and facilitating the transition to employment. The authors propose that instead of perpetuating homogeneity in the world of education and work, higher education can use the inherent requirements to increase social justice and equity (Corcoran et al., 2022, p. 69, own translation).

In terms of accessibility possibilities, Cotán et al. (2021), Perera et al. (2021), and Bong and Chen (2021) refer to the use of technology as a mediator of inclusive academic management processes. Despite the growing use of

ICT in higher education over the past few years, Bong and Chen (2021) assert that professors still require training in creating digital learning resources and environments that are accessible and welcoming to all. This includes teaching them about the Universal Learning Design (ULD), laws, standards, and guidelines for accessibility, as well as differences in the educational setting.

Perera et al. (2021) value the use of technological media and virtual environments in implementing inclusive educational practices. They refer to a broad sense of inclusive education, not exclusively for people with disabilities, since they identify that this type of mediation facilitates flexible regulation of the pace and intensity of learning according to each student's interests and individualities.

A third aspect refers to the need to have inclusive professors in higher educational institutions (Márquez & Melero, 2022; Moriña & Orozco, 2022a; Moriña & Orozco, 2022b; Moriña & Orozco, 2022c). Marquez and Melero (2022) investigate professors' knowledge and beliefs about inclusive education and find that most of them do not know about it. Furthermore, they state that

[...] The goodwill, sensitivity, and professional commitment of the professors are not enough to face the diversity in the university classrooms if they do not have the knowledge and skills to develop more inclusive curricula. (p. 840, own translation).

This knowledge about inclusive education differs significantly between disciplines; therefore, it is important to have a teaching training program that is not homogeneous but can respond to the specific needs of professors in each area.

Márquez and Melero (2022) identify three categories regarding professors' beliefs: 1) equal access to university opportunities that all students should have; 2) inclusive education as care for students with disabilities; and 3) a broader vision about everyone's participation and success. The findings point to the need to think about the necessity of improving professors' training processes, starting and deepening debates on the meaning and implications of inclusion (Márquez & Melero, 2022, p. 842, own translation).

Moriña and Orozco (2022a, 2022b, and 2022c) state that inclusive professors recognize diversity in its complexity, and they do not focus on the permanent difference between students with or without disabilities; they remark that the most inclusive teaching practices are those that promote active and participatory interaction. On the other hand, the researchers identify that an inclusive professor facilitates learning for all students, has skills that are not only professional but also personal, and directly influences student success. They also emphasize the need for "well-informed and well-trained" teaching staff to provide an education

that responds to diversity and enables progress in the design of educational practices for all.

Finally, some studies related to the design of indicators facilitate the evaluation of institutional processes and the implementation of actions, plans, and projects to transform higher education systems towards inclusive educational processes (Cifuentes-Faura & Faura-Martínez, 2022; Márquez et al., 2021). Cifuentes-Faura and Faura-Martínez (2022) work on a dynamic indicator of inclusive education that sets a ranking of those universities best prepared to offer inclusive resources in Spain. Márquez et al. (2021) propose a system of indicators that will make it easier for university institutions to self-assess their students' inclusion conditions in terms of institutional culture, equitable access, student-centered learning, well-being and participation, mobility and employability, and academic achievement. They also state that progress towards the construction of universities where everyone can learn and participate is an unstoppable task that many institutions do not know how to deal with (Márquez et al., 2021, p. 33, own translation).

## Conclusions

From this review, it is possible to understand that the discourse of inclusive education tends to move towards a direct connection with the education of the population with disabilities instead of institutions and practices that value, recognize, and act according to diversity, singularity, and heterogeneity. The studies identified mostly associate inclusive education with the population, their needs, and their requirements.

Most of the identified barriers are the attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and perceptions of professors about differences associated with disability as barriers; other research findings highlight physical and architectural conditions without basic accessibility and are focused on pedagogical and didactic mediations. Standard students are the target audience for institutional planning that takes into account human diversity in various scenarios.

Most studies conclude that professors require training with an inclusive profile. This involves processes for both their human condition and their differences, as well as those that emphasize the development of pedagogical and didactic skills to design and deploy curriculum with universality and diversification.

Another identified opportunity was the flexibility of pedagogical mediations of ICT in education, as well as the use of e-learning and b-learning models as options to promote the implementation of accessibility for educational resources and teaching processes, taking into account various conditions such as time, language, and resources.

In addition, instruments and indicators are emerging to contribute to institutional self-assessment processes, make visible barriers, establish possible actions, strategies, plans, projects, and policies to implement, and thus move towards the consolidation of increasingly inclusive higher education institutions.

Finally, several studies demonstrate significant progress in implementing the public policy of inclusive higher education. However, it is imperative to go beyond the parameters of public policy and act cooperatively to change beliefs, customs, and behaviors that limit the right to an equalitarian education.

The systematic review of inclusive higher education identifies the need to broaden and deepen its theoretical and epistemological foundations, examining the connections between inclusive education and various perspectives such as the critical theory of education, poststructuralism, feminist theories, cultural studies, postcolonial and decolonial studies, queer theory, and crip theory. It is possible to advance towards understanding human differences and diversity apart from the dichotomy of normal and abnormal. That contributes to the consolidation of a culture of reception and appreciation within academic, pedagogical, research, relationship, and management practices for diversity to foster the presence, learning, and participation of all and everyone in the daily institutional life as a condition of social justice.



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