

Ethnic Discrimination against Mapuche Students in Urban High Schools in the Araucanía Region, Chile

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Received: April 2, 2015 Accepted: May 8, 2015 Online Published: September 28, 2015

doi:10.5539/ies.v8n10p96

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v8n10p96>

Abstract

Ethnic or racial discrimination towards children and adolescents at schools is of concern in many contexts around the world because it is associated with diverse psychosocial, behavioural, emotional, and identity problems. The purpose of this study was to identify the types of ethnic discrimination experienced by indigenous Mapuche adolescents in schools in Chile. The study was qualitative in nature and two techniques were used: semi-structured interviews and focus groups involving an 'indicative' sample of 80 participants (30 students and 50 teachers) from three urban high schools in the Araucanía Region, Chile. Three modes of ethnic discrimination were identified: *verbal*, *behavioural-attitudinal* and *institutional*. A 'non virtuous cycle' of discrimination is suggested. It originates with teachers' prejudiced attitudes that lead to attributions of deficit among Mapuche adolescents. When these attributions are activated, they lead to a diminished sense of competence, avoidance and segregation among Mapuche students who then withdraw from active participation in learning, which perpetuates and confirms teachers' prejudice and attributions. Recommendations for the educational system, schools, and teachers are discussed to diminish the manifestation of ethnic discrimination at schools and its negative consequences for indigenous adolescent population.

Keywords: adolescents, ethnic discrimination, high school, peer discrimination, teacher discrimination

1. Introduction

Racial and ethnic discrimination have shown to generate a negative impact on targeted children and adolescents' psychosocial adjustment (Corenblum & Armstrong 2012; Lysne & Levy, 1997). This impedes the development of their ethnic identity and decreases their racial or ethnic pride (Smith et al., 2003), causing a reduced sense of security, feelings of social distancing, and a pessimistic view of the future (Becerra et al., 2009). Among the side effects reported are the reduction in academic self-concept and performance (Brown & Chu, 2012), the decrease in global self-esteem (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006; Seaton & Yip 2009; Seaton et al., 2013), and an increase in depressive symptomology (Mesch et al., 2008) and behavioral problems (Wong et al., 2003).

Several studies have shown that the majority of discrimination experienced by children and adolescents occurs in the school context, and is perpetrated by both peers and teachers. For example, Ruck and Wortley (2002) examined the perception of discrimination and differential treatment in the disciplinary practices in secondary schools in Canada. A sample of 1870 adolescents from different ethnic and racial origins revealed that students were much more likely than white students to perceive discrimination from their teachers' attitudes and behavior towards them. Similarly, Wong et al. (2003) studied African Americans' experiences of racial discrimination in school context to identify its impacts and the factors that buffer such impacts. They documented discrimination from teachers and peers and reported that a strong, positive ethnic identity reduced the magnitude of association between racial discrimination experiences and a range of negative outcomes.

While studies like the above show that racial discrimination on the part of teachers and peers can lead to a range of negative effects and consequences, there is little knowledge about ethnic discrimination against indigenous adolescents in schools. The aim of the present study was to identify the main types of ethnic discrimination against indigenous Mapuche adolescents in Chile by analysing the oral discourse of Mapuche and non Mapuche teachers and students. By unpacking their argumentation and discourse strategies we aim to reveal different types

and subtypes of discrimination, and the way these practices are channelled through discourse.

The Mapuche group is the largest indigenous group in Chile, representing 87.3% of the national indigenous population and 4% of the total national population. The Mapuche are principally located in the Araucanía Region where 71% live in rural areas, their index of human development is low, and conditions of marginality and social vulnerability are commonplace (Llancapán & Huentequeo, 2006). However, Mapuche people who now live in cities are also confronted with an asymmetric social system in a position of cultural and social domination (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Honohan, 2014). This asymmetrical social relationship is associated with discrimination. A number of studies (Merino et al., 2009a; Merino & Mellor, 2009; Saiz et al., 2009; Quilaqueo et al., 2007) have reported the experiences of adult Mapuche people in both the Chilean capital city Santiago, and Temuco in the Araucanía region characterized by a large Mapuche population. As reported by Merino (2006, 2007) and Merino et al. (2009) discrimination experiences were analyzed through a taxonomy of racism derived from indigenous (Mellor, 2003) and Vietnamese's (Mellor, 2004) perceived discrimination in Australia. In a similar way Merino et al. (2009a) revealed that adult Mapuche people experience verbal, behavioral, institutional and macro-level discrimination. Verbal discrimination included name-calling associated with ethnic reference, physical traits or skin color, demeaning remarks including jokes or taunts, intimidating, inferiorizing, or threats, and abuse. The behavioral mode encompassed ignoring, avoiding, observing, inferiorizing, patronizing, segregating, denying identity, and mocking. The institutional component reports on actions like over-application of rules, norms and regulations, and the denial of opportunities, mainly at public offices and services. These practices at the interpersonal level are characterized by a clearly identifiable perpetrator performing discriminatory actions on behalf of the institution for which they work. Finally, Merino et al. (2009b) identified the macro social mode expressed by means of disinterest in the indigenous group from the mainstream society, an ethnocentric perspective of history (i.e. the denial of the indigenous perspective), cultural dominance as embodied in legislation, language dominance, social and economic policies, health and educational systems, and in misinformation that is widely spread by the mass media. Interestingly, Merino and Mellor (2009) revealed that among the four modes of discrimination, the verbal component was the most recurring and that school was the main context for discrimination, being the teacher the main perpetrator. However, these findings were based on interviews with adults who were reporting on their past experiences Mellor et al. (2009) also investigated the impacts of these experiences, as reported by Mapuche people, which included feeling psychologically wounded, aroused anger, undifferentiated bad feelings, shame, and a sense of powerlessness.

Given the prevalence of discrimination toward Mapuche people in Chile and the negative impacts it can have on its targets in the school system, it is important that contemporary data be obtained from school settings for an understanding of discrimination in school settings. This could inform anti-discrimination programs to be implemented in the school system at a time in the targets' lifespan that many negative consequences of discrimination could be prevented; and such results could also inform teacher training programs.

2. Method

The study was carried out in three urban secondary schools in the coast area of the Araucanía Region, Chile, an area characterized by a 50% Mapuche population with high social vulnerability and poverty records. The sample includes 80 students and teachers. The students' sample is made up by 30 male and female participants (Mapuche N=15; non-Mapuche N=15) and in alignment with the objectives of the study Mapuche and non Mapuche students were included in the sample to enrich and deepen the knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Contrasting two or more observers' reports prevents the bias that one data source might produce, and also leads to more reliable conclusions (Denzin, 2006). On the other hand, the teachers' sample includes 50 male and female, being 10% of them of Mapuche origin, this reflecting the current teacher staff ethnic origin of the schools participating in the study. The criteria for including Mapuche and non Mapuche teachers in a same focus group obeys to the fact that in Chile both groups face the same teaching difficulties to achieve motivation and effective learning from their Mapuche students. In fact, none of them possess intercultural teacher training which would make a difference in the pedagogical strategies used in the classroom and/or in the affective bonds that may upsurge between teachers and students.

Sample selection was purposive (Flick, 2004) and the criteria for inclusion required that teachers have more than three years of work experience, whose ages range between 27 and 56 years, and that they teach first secondary high school level. Student participants were required to be between 13 and 16 years and be attending first secondary level. All students of the sample come from rural communities and have a direct indigenous ascendant which was verified by holding a Mapuche surname.

2.1 Procedure

Instruments and ethic protocol approved by the University Ethics Committee were used to conduct the study and the corresponding consent from the Headmaster of each school was required. Students and teachers were invited to participate and read a description of the study aims and requirements from participants. Those who agreed to participate signed the ethic consent form.

Two techniques were used for data collection: 30 open ended semi-structured individual interviews conducted with students, and 8 teacher focus groups for teachers (N=1 Mapuche, 7 non-Mapuche, per group). Interviews and focus groups were conducted during school hours and within the school buildings. Both techniques were applied by a Mapuche researcher. The interviews were audio-taped for later transcription with previous written approval from the participants.

In the extracts below ‘HS’ stands for High school and their corresponding identification number (HS1, HS2, HS3), ‘S’ stands for Student where ‘SM’ represents Mapuche student, ‘SNM’ denotes non Mapuche student, ‘T’ stands for Teacher and ‘TNM’ means non Mapuche Teacher, and ‘TM’ stands for Mapuche teacher.

2.2 Analysis

Categorization of perceived discrimination was approached from a psychological perspective based on Merino and Mellor’s taxonomy (2009) which revealed four modes of perceived discrimination amongst Mapuche adults in two Chilean cities. These are verbal, behavioural, institutional and macro-level which served for the coding of discriminatory practices related by the participants.

The procedure for thematic analysis considered first the codification method of AtlasTi 6.1 to reveal the main categories. Following Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997) open and axial coding was developed and constant and comparative method became the basis for data analysis. To increase information validity triangulation by participant was made (based on students and teachers) and also by technique used (individual and focus group) (Flick, 2004).

For revealing the emotional effects of discrimination on the Mapuche students testimonies were transcribed using a simplified version of Jefferson’s transcription symbology (1983). In this system (...) shows that the extract is the continuation of a previous discourse; underlined words signal special vocal emphasis; [...] indicates a longer pause to recall feelings and emotions, order them into ideas and choose the best words to convey the desired meaning; simple quotation marks (‘’) indicate discriminatory words or special words the author wants to highlight; double quotation marks (“”) show the beginning and end of a third voice incorporated within the speaker’s discourse.

3. Results

The analysis of the data identified experiences of perceived discrimination in the school in the following modes and types.

Table 1. Modes and types of perceived discrimination at school

Perceived discrimination at school	
Mode	Types
Verbal discrimination	Nicknames
	Teasing
	Inferiorizing comments
Behavioral and attitudinal discrimination	Plaintive attitude
	Avoidance and/or separation
	Transmission of low expectations
Institutional discrimination	Pseudo cultural valorization
	Pedagogic desperation

In the following sections, each kind of experience is described through the narratives of the participants.

3.1 Verbal Discrimination

The analysis revealed that the most prevalent type of perceived discrimination in the schools surveyed is of verbal nature being expressed in three discursive modalities: nicknaming, teasing and mocking and inferiorizing. The use of **nicknames** such as ‘black’, ‘indian’ and ‘curiche’ imply ridiculing, ironizing or the attribution of ethnically-determined traits to Mapuche youngsters, as described by an adolescent participant:

(...) yes ‘po’ (Note 1) *the nicknames are always to laugh at us. For example, to me, they call me [...] pilme* (Note 2) *and they laugh I don’t know if you know what they are, they’re like [...] some black insects [...] and I have to accept it, and at the beginning one accepts it because it sounds funny, but you [...] end up getting tired of it”* [HS_1, SNM_9]

In this interview the adolescent relates a personal experience of how his non Mapuche peers call him names. Being called ‘pilme’ arouses strong emotional feelings in the youngster, however he adopts a passive attitude of acceptance (“and I have to accept it”). While at first such names seem humorous, over time they tire the Mapuche youth emotionally.

A second verbal modality is **teasing and mocking**. These practices highlight the physical features attributed to the Mapuche people, for example the Mapuche accent in the way they speak the Spanish language, the indigenous last names, and the stereotypes historically attributed to the Mapuches. This can be observed in the narration of one student:

(...) *They say that they respect us but they make fun of us [...] how we talk [...] our last names [...] everything. The other day there was a drunk guy in a picture of a book and someone said “look Huelche it’s your dad” and everyone thought it was funny; they do it just to have fun of our race.* [HS_3, SM_24]

As is observed in the extract, the student is conscious of the contradiction in his non-Mapuche schoolmates between what is said and what is done (“they say they respect us but they still make fun of us”). The use of direct speech invigorates the expression of feelings (“look Huelche it’s your dad”) and thus dramatizing the narration. In contrast, by presenting themselves as ‘spectators’, teachers tend to de-personalize their testimonies about their observations of teasing practices in the classroom. For example, one teacher commented “one sees every day how they are teased”.

Inferiorizing comments are a third mechanism of verbal discrimination perceived by Mapuche students, which are principally performed by teachers. Such comments affect Mapuche youngsters in a number of ways, including, attributing Mapuche parents a lack of concern about their children’s education and Mapuche students with inferior cognitive capacity, as reported by a Mapuche student.

(...) *one time I heard the teacher say that he was tired because our families didn’t care about school because we were doing bad at school [...] because we didn’t understand right away [...] and he told the other teacher that we wouldn’t understand even if he used apples to explain things.* [HS_1, SM_5]

In this extract the metaphor “not being able to understand even using concrete objects like apples” aligns with the above prejudice of attributing Mapuche people with a diminished cognitive capacity and a more concrete type of intelligence. This prejudice reveals teachers’ representation of the Mapuche worldview, their rhythm of life, beliefs and customs, as is corroborated by a teacher at the same school.

(...) *well everything becomes more difficult for them to do at school [...] I’ve told them “kids, you have to forget your limitations [...] you have to see that life is different here in the city, you can’t keep going with the same rhythm of the country [...] because what one wants as a teacher [...] is that they wake up and [...] abandon this state of quietness and passive contemplation that characterizes them* [HS_2, TNM_19].

In the above extract the teacher argues that the low scholarly performance of Mapuche adolescents is due to the relaxed Mapuche “rhythm of life” which prevents Mapuche students from rural areas meeting the needs and requirements of the school. The teacher perceives that his role is to draw these children away from the adverse cultural conditions of slowness and contemplation.

3.2 Behavioral and Attitudinal Discrimination

In this category three behaviors and attitudes are revealed: plaintive attitude, avoidance and segregation, and transmission of low expectations. The discourse of **plaintive feelings** is based on a long-term prejudice that unfolds at home where Mapuche parents don’t teach their children the basics like speaking and expressing correctly, and they also don’t motivate them to improve. This prejudice yields among teachers a feeling of sorrow for the indigenous students and the need to ‘rescue’ them, as seen in the following teacher’s testimony.

(...) *so one tries to help them, I give them advice so that they get ahead [...] in the case of the girls for example*

so they can learn and know how to behave so they become ladies [...] I do it because I know that at home they don't have good examples and this makes one feel sad [...] because they are pretty but nobody motivates them to be feminine or take care of their hygiene or personal presentation as society is going to demand from them later. [HS2, TNM_27].

In his discourse the teacher highlights his indigenous students' sociocultural deficiencies based on the prejudice that states that the Mapuche culture is 'primitive'. This is done by exemplifying the case of Mapuche girls in his class and his responsibility as a teacher to teach them how to act in Chilean society, and in the case of girls, to become "ladies". This prejudice was corroborated by other teachers who also displayed sympathetic attitudes and helping attitude toward their indigenous students, as seen in the following excerpt.

(...) I bring them materials, magazines, newspapers [...] I offer them movies so their world is opened, so they widen their language [...] so they get cultured [...] because it's sad [...] one knows that without help they will get nowhere." [HS_2, TNM_29].

For this teacher, providing his students with cultural help is essential, otherwise they would remain in a 'uncultured' state. The use of metaphors ("so their world is opened") highlights the teacher's feelings about his students' limitations.

A second kind of behavioural discrimination involves **avoidance and segregation**, principally on the part of teachers. In interviews and focus groups teachers' perception of their Mapuche students were displayed as a severe problem that the teacher does not know how to face, a deep burden that youngsters carry including difficulties and inabilities. This causes anguish and despair among teachers, resulting in behaviors of avoidance, and in some cases, segregation of indigenous students, and focusing the class attention to the non-indigenous students. Furthermore, for teachers, the presence of indigenous students in their school is seen to contribute to the lower scores their schools obtain in standardized tests by the Chilean educational system. These matters are evident in the following teacher testimony.

(...) we know that teaching in these contexts with such high vulnerability and working with high indigenous population is very complicated [...] so one has to make use of all one's creativity and patience to make these children get better results in the SIMCE (Note 3) [...] and we finish the day feeling that we have achieved something and that we have contributed with something to their lives [...] but as time passes one becomes conscious of all their difficulties and finally one runs out of teaching strategies [...] and in the end we decide to focus on those that show more interest. [HS_1, TNM_14].

The above testimony characterizes teachers' feelings of despair in their teaching role, particularly in rural or semi urban schools in the Araucanía region with a large Mapuche student population.

On the other hand, Mapuche students are aware of their teachers' feelings of despair and their being segregated because of their deficiencies, as is observed in the following excerpt.

(...) it is very evident that the teachers prefer to work with the kids that have better grades [...] as well as the ones who are smarter [...] those who bring all their school stuff [...] they are the favorite ones [...] so teachers simply ignore us because [...] we don't have school materials or stuff like that [...] so we just sit at the back. [HS_2, SM_14].

As a result of the teachers' attitudes and actions seen above a third type of discrimination arises: teachers' **transmission of low expectations**. This is expressed in the classroom by the absence of differentiated teaching practices and by the presence of patronizing practices. An example of this is observed in the following excerpt.

(...) for example the Mapuche child is more timid to talk to the teacher [...] one knows that it is harder for them to stand up and say "Miss, can you explain this to me or can you say it again?" [...] No they are going to remain silent [...] so one has to approach the student and say "Juan, did you understand?" don't tell me you understood because I know you didn't [...] or else I'd look into their notebooks because I know they did not understand." [HS_1, TM_16].

The teacher's testimony above displays the presence of a vicious cycle affecting the learning process and the transmission to the indigenous students the implicit message of low academic expectations in the school. In spite of the teacher's professional commitment, his patronizing attitude reveals his failure to value the difference and diversity present in the classroom. Thus, the assisted student is situated in an asymmetric relationship which indirectly informs them they are being undervalued.

3.3 Institutional Discrimination

This type of discrimination refers to practices carried out by individuals under the guise of the regulations and norms established by the institution in which they work. These practices discriminate and marginalize persons or minority groups from the benefits that the institution provides (Mellor, 2003; Merino & Mellor, 2009). The analysis of the data revealed two types of institutional discrimination on the part of teachers: cultural pseudo-valorization and pedagogic despair.

Cultural pseudo-valorization is observed in teachers and school authorities openly value diversity and the cultural richness of indigenous students but at the same time they pass on the message that these students are ashamed of being Mapuche. Cultural pseudo-valorization is observed in the narration of a high-school teacher.

(...) here we make an effort to value their culture [...] their traditions [...] but it is the same students who show little interest in doing so [...] here you find kids that don't want to talk about the Mapuche culture [...] because there is no ethnic identification [...] maybe this happens because of some sort of shame they feel [...] or maybe it is just because they absolutely don't know about their culture. [HS_1, TNM_10].

The teacher's basic argument holds that although the school team values the Mapuche culture it is the students who do not collaborate. This becomes an interethnic polarization practice whereby teachers situate themselves in a psychological space detached from the Mapuche students, leaving little or no option to intercultural dialogue.

Pedagogical despair is another way of institutional discrimination where a combination of negative emotions of frustration, despair and professional demotivation result in the conviction that, in spite of teachers efforts, the student does not keep interest or has the minimum educability conditions to learn. This level of pedagogical despair can also generate among teachers psychological illnesses as reported by one teacher. *(...) they come here and it's enough for them to be present or watching people around [...] for them it seems sufficient and [...] one tries and tries [...] in one way or another [...]with various techniques, and they [...] nothing [...]they simply don't get involved [...] here it's usual that teachers get sick [...] it's happened to me [...] I mean [...]tell me who prepared us to work with kids with so many difficulties? And the worst thing is that here almost all teachers have been ill with medical license and nothing changes. [HS_3, TNM_46].*

In this above extract the teacher's high level of frustration is observed. The teacher has tried various techniques to engage his Mapuche students without positive outcomes. This has been the cause of the teacher's getting sick on more than one occasion. It is interesting to note the rhetorical question directed to the interviewer "because tell me 'who prepared us to work with children with so many difficulties?'" This reveals the origin of teachers' difficulties to deal with teaching contexts with indigenous students. The national curriculum of teacher training does not formally require that trainee teachers be given formal academic preparation about indigenous culture and language, nor intercultural education.

4. Discussion

Ethnic or racial discrimination toward children and adolescents in school is associated with diverse, negative consequences for psychosocial, behavioral, and emotional functioning, and identity (Berkel et al., 2010; Becerra et al., 2009; Brown & Chu, 2012; Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012; Lysne & Levy, 1997; Merino et al., 2009a; Smith et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006; White et al., 2014). Results from the current study carried out in three urban high schools suggest that the principal modes and of ethnic discrimination being expressed towards indigenous adolescents in the Chilean school context are: *verbal discrimination* which is manifested principally in the form of nicknames, teasing and inferiorizing comments; *behavioral-attitudinal discrimination* which is expressed by plaintive attitude, avoidance and/or segregation and transmission of low expectations; and *institutional discrimination* which unfolds in two ways: cultural pseudo-valorization and pedagogic despair.

Verbal discrimination is articulated by the use of derogatory nicknames and teasing being perpetrated by non Mapuche adolescents while teachers tend to use mainly inferiorizing comments. This finding is consistent with Merino's (2007) study amongst Mapuche adults who reported that they had been discriminated against in the period between their childhood and adolescence through nicknames and teasing by their non-Mapuche classmates. Further, Merino's participants reported that although teachers did not make comments explicitly ridiculing students, they made particular or general comments that devalued participants' ethnic identity.

While the use of nicknames and teasing is often part of daily dynamics between adolescents, the current study found that these practices are especially significant when perpetrated by non-indigenous students in relation to indigenous students. That verbal discrimination develops a derogatory context and unfolds in a unidirectional manner helps to sustain an asymmetrical relationship which contributes to the arousal of feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem among Mapuche adolescents. These negative effects caused by discrimination have been the

subject of various previous studies (Berkel et al., 2010; Becerra et al., 2009; Brown & Chu, 2012; Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012; Lysne & Levy, 1997; Merino et al., 2009a; Smith et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006).

Inferiorizing comments made by teachers take three manifestations and correspond to the perception that educating indigenous adolescents is complex and difficult. The first attributes Mapuche students deficiencies in intellectual capacities and cognitive resources, the second attributes dysfunctional personality traits (passiveness, lack of motivation, irresponsibility, among others), and the third relates to the lack of interest and commitment from Mapuche families in engaging with the school processes and their lack of expectations for the future. The inferiorizing comments made by teachers suggest the absence of a validating attitude towards the Mapuche culture, its particular worldview, lifestyle, beliefs and customs.

Rather than recognizing the traditional classroom as a culturally-diverse space (Dietz & Mateos-Cortés, 2011; Schemelkes, 2004, 2010) teachers account for differences in terms of insufficiency & cultural di-functionality with respect to the demands and requirements of the school system. The teachers in our study displayed an absence of intercultural perspective of education (Essomba, 2010; Leiva & López, 2011) that precludes the opportunity of seeing cultural diversity as an exceptional opportunity for learning and of the development not only of some, but all students (Echeita, 2007; Leiva, 2010).

The second mode of ethnic discrimination identified, *behavioral-attitudinal*, was manifested by patronizing attitudes, avoidance/segregation, and transmission of low expectations. Patronizing attitudes are observed in teachers' daily activities through four manifestations: giving advice to adolescents who are the victims of discrimination, providing additional learning material, school resources (e.g. copybooks, pencils, shoes, cardigans), and reducing academic demands against the indigenous youngsters.

In a patronizing attitude underlies a number of educational actions that connote compassionate helping behavior due to the vulnerable and precarious living conditions of the Mapuche students. These attitudes and behaviors are perceived by Mapuche adolescents to convey a sense of inferiority and underestimation, making them feel uncomfortable and minimizing their ethnic pride. In fact, these attitudes and behaviors explicate students' ethnic shame at school, as it has been reported by some authors (Gonzalez, 2009; Lysne et al., 1997; Smith et al., 2003; Wong et al., 2003).

This patronizing attitude and overprotective approximation of the teacher reveals a lack of professional training in intercultural education which would provide him with the pedagogical tools to value and work with the cultural differences present in the classroom (Essomba, 2003, 2010; Echeita, 2007). There is the need to eradicate paternalistic practices that situate the assisted adolescent in an asymmetric relationship that indirectly communicates inferiority and underestimation (Becerra, 2011).

Avoidance and/or segregation attitudes revealed in our study can be understood from teachers' perspectives since the presence of indigenous students in the classroom demands understanding of ancestral knowledge and the development different pedagogical techniques. As a consequence, the teacher feels ill-equipped so that avoidance and segregation behaviors against Mapuche students are expressed in the pedagogic practice as teachers focus their efforts on non-Mapuche students. Teachers' prejudiced beliefs with respect to that Mapuche students hold deficiencies and inabilities correlate with the discriminatory and avoidance behaviors revealed by the analysis. Consequently Mapuche adolescents tend to self-marginalize from the class or develop a non-protagonist contemplative attitude, taking refuge in their own group of peers as a protective mechanism.

The third mode of ethnic discrimination is *institutional* and is expressed in cultural pseudo-valorization and pedagogical desperation. Cultural pseudo-valorization is expressed in privileging practices of the western culture and a monoculture organization of the school space (Quintriqueo & Torres, 2012; Schmelkes, 2004, 2010). This pseudo-valorization is perceived by the indigenous youth when teachers and the educational institution exhibit occasional, discursive and unsystematic interest for the Mapuche culture and traditions. This is manifested through folkloric activities in some emblematic festivities as the Wetripantu (Mapuche New Year), in contrast with a systematic and permanent valorization of the Chilean traditions.

Pedagogical despair is observed in the lack of motivation and disenchantment displayed by educational authorities and teachers with respect to Mapuche students' learning. From teachers' perspective this results from the complex conditions of educability and low educational results achieved by the indigenous youth generating feelings of inability and lack of skills to manage interculturality within the classroom. Teachers' discourse on pedagogical despair seems to normalize discouragement and dejection within the teaching body, as well as a loss of professional motivation.

The above findings imply the presence of a non-virtuous cycle that may explain the persistence of ethnic

discrimination in schools. First, the teacher constructs a prejudiced attitude which attributes lacking, difficulties and inability on the part of indigenous adolescents to adequately respond to the school demands. Secondly, ethnic prejudice and the attribution of the aforementioned deficits, prompts in the teacher the conviction that the presence of indigenous students hinders their teaching practice. Thirdly, the teacher develops a diminished feeling of competence and inability to work with Mapuche students, generating anxiety, demotivation and pedagogical desperation. This latter stimulates teachers to avoid Mapuche students as a defense and protective mechanism and advocate their pedagogic efforts to the non-indigenous group. Finally, a sort of 'privileged' pedagogic link between teacher and non Mapuche students is perceived by indigenous adolescents that in turn generates self-marginalization and demotivation. This circle seems to unpack the complex configuration of ethnic discrimination in schools, however it requires further examination by longitudinal studies over time.

Our study revealed the presence of negative effects of perceived discrimination such as lowered general self-esteem, sense of insecurity, decreased academic self-concept and ethnic pride, social invisibility in the classroom, and lack of future personal projection. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Becerra et al., 2009; Berkel et al., 2010; Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012; Lysne & Levy, 1997; Merino et al., 2009b; Smith et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006).

In contrast with findings reported by Wong et al. (2003) which point that experiences of racial discrimination from teachers and peers at school predict not only the negative effects mentioned before, but also mental health problems such as increases in aggressive behaviours, anger and the proportion of one's friends with violent conducts, the current study did not reveal relationship between ethnic discrimination and aggressive behavioral attitudes or trends to associate with violent groups at school. Rather, the students were observed to 'pull back' and become passive in the classroom, this seems to reflect the history of cultural dominance and land dispossession that characterizes interethnic relations between the European colonizers and the indigenous Mapuche people, and the collision of two different worldviews.

5. Implications

This study identified three conditions within school institutions that allow the generation of diverse types of ethnic discrimination: a lack of knowledge about indigenous culture, the persistent application of the cultural deficit theory to the indigenous youth, and the lack of intercultural training in teacher training programs in Chile. Lack of knowledge and valuation of the Mapuche culture is observed in the Chilean educational system which disregards the character and rhythm of the traditional life of the indigenous group. Increasing awareness of and responsiveness to cultural richness in the classroom is a challenge for schools that have large indigenous population (Merino, 2012). Furthermore, valuing the cultural richness should be a basic pre-requisite if teachers are to offer equal educational opportunities to all their students (Echeita, 2007; Essomba, 2003, 2010; Leiva, 2010; Leiva and López, 2011).

One limitation of our study points at its sample of indigenous Mapuche students, their non Mapuche classmates and teachers in three schools of the coastal area in the Araucania region, an area of severe social deprivation and poverty. The results then do not allow generalization since there may be encountered different pedagogic conditions in schools located in other areas of the region (Andean or valley) with less serious sociocultural conditions. On another point, notwithstanding the inclusion of Mapuche and non Mapuche teachers in a same focus group was due to the criteria that both groups lack intercultural teacher training, it would have been valuable to have administered focus groups only to Mapuche teachers, separate from their non mapuche colleagues. In this sense, avoiding participants feel intimidated and not showing their most intimate interpretations in front of whom they may consider 'different'. In a same mode, although the interviews and focus groups of our study reached saturation levels (Flick, 2004) it would have been interesting to have used complementary approaches, for example ethnographic techniques that may have provided more contextualization and registration of facts occurrence (Bisquerra, 2009).

6. Conclusion

The findings revealed by the study indicate that ethnic discrimination towards indigenous adolescents is recurrent in urban Chilean high schools, and is perpetrated by means of verbal, behavioral-attitudinal and institutional practices. Further, ethnic discrimination seems to be embedded in a 'non-virtuous circle' associated with deficit attributions. Schools and authorities need to be more supportive of the indigenous culture, and teachers require to be well trained in intercultural education. This may lead to increased cultural well-being and academic performance among indigenous students.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge research grants General Direction of Research at Universidad Católica in Temuco-Chile, DGIUCT Project 200953 and CONICYT-FONDECYT Project 11090021 (National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research-Chile) which financed the current study.

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Notes

Note 1. 'po' corresponds to the discursive marker 'pues' (so) which is phonetically reduced.

Note 2. Pilme is a black and long insect, it measures between 9 and 14 mm, that has long black antennae. It attacks foliage, principally potatoes, leaving the central nerves of the plant visible.

Note 3. SIMCE is the national system of evaluation and measurement of learning outcomes from the Ministry of Education of Chile.

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