

# Racial Intimidation at a School in Amazonas, Colombia: Elevating the Voices of Children through Iconic Narration\*

Intimidación racial en un colegio del Amazonas, Colombia: exaltando las voces de los niños a través de la narración icónica

Intimidação racial em uma escola do Amazonas, Colômbia: exaltando as vozes das crianças através da narração icônica

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## Abstract

When complex dynamics are analyzed such as those of racial intimidation in children and in a cultural context as the Amazon (Colombia), it is necessary to do so by exalting the voices of children and not only those of their adult caregivers. Doing so confirms the active role they have and their position in the processes that link them. As a result, 20 indigenous children and settlers from an urban school in Leticia (Amazonas, Colombia) participated in this study; a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design in which two instruments were used: interview guides semi-structured and a set of 9 vignettes designed to promote iconic stories by children. The material collected

was analyzed through Nvivo software categorizing data in risk factors, support networks, coping strategies, reinforcements, and consequences of aggression-generating situations. The results allow to identify that the process of intimidation is dynamic, have several actors participating in different scenarios, with a wide variety of factors. The present paper went beyond the traditional investigations that have been focusing on characterizing the victim and victimizer. Additionally, these results show the potential risk for the ethnic cultures in the Amazonas and discuss lines of research and intervention that must be explored. *Keywords:* Racial intimidation, students, indigenous, iconic narration.

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## Resumen

Cuando se analizan dinámicas complejas como son las de la intimidación racial en población infantil en un contexto cultural como el del Amazonas (Colombia), hay que hacerlo exaltando las voces de los niños y no solo las de sus adultos cuidadores. Hacerlo ratifica el rol activo con que estos cuentan y su protagonismo en los procesos que les vinculan. A raíz de ello, en este estudio participaron veinte niños indígenas y colonos de una escuela urbana de Leticia (Amazonas, Colombia), y se partió de un enfoque cualitativo, haciendo uso de un diseño fenomenológico en que se emplearon dos instrumentos: guías de entrevista semiestructurada y un conjunto de nueve viñetas diseñadas para promover narraciones icónicas por parte de los niños. El material recopilado se analizó a través del software Nvivo, clasificando datos en factores de riesgo, redes de apoyo, estrategias de afrontamiento, refuerzos y consecuencias de situaciones generadoras de agresión. Los resultados permiten confirmar que el proceso de intimidación es dinámico y tiene varios actores que participan en diferentes escenarios, con una amplia variedad de factores. Además, se fue más allá de investigaciones tradicionales que se han centrado en caracterizar a la víctima y al victimario, mostrándose el rol de otros actores y posibles riesgos para las culturas étnicas en el Amazonas, además de discutirse líneas de investigación e intervención que pueden ser exploradas. *Palabras clave:* intimidación racial, estudiantes, indígenas, narración icónica.

## Resumo

Quando são analisadas dinâmicas complexas, como as de intimidação racial em crianças e em um contexto cultural tão específico quanto o da Amazônia (Colômbia), é necessário fazê-lo exaltando as vozes das crianças e não apenas as de seus cuidadores adultos. Isso confirma o papel ativo que eles têm e seu lugar nos processos que os vinculam. Como resultado, 20 crianças indígenas e colonos de uma escola urbana de Leticia (Amazonas, Colômbia) participaram deste estudo e partiram de uma abordagem qualitativa, utilizando um desenho fenomenológico no qual foram utilizados dois instrumentos: guias de entrevista semiestruturado e um conjunto de 9

vinhetas projetadas para promover histórias icônicas de crianças. O material recopilado se analisou através do software Nvivo, classificando dados em fatores de risco, redes de apoio, estratégias de afrontamento, reforços e consequências de situações geradoras de agressão. Os resultados permitem confirmar que o processo de intimidação é dinâmico e tem vários atores que participam em diferentes cenários, com uma ampla variedade de fatores. Em suma, cabe destacar que se foi para além de pesquisas tradicionais que se têm centrados em caracterizar à vítima e ao vitimador, mostrando-se o papel de outros atores e possíveis riscos para as culturas étnicas no Amazonas. Por último, discutem-se linhas de pesquisa e intervenção que podem ser exploradas. *Palavras-chave:* intimidação racial, estudantes, indígenas, narração icônica.

School intimidation is also known as bullying or school harassment (Uribe, Orcasita & Aguillón-Gómez, 2012); sharing the same meaning, attributes, and effects. However, in this paper we employed intimidation because of their recognition among both Colombian and international researchers. This term refers to aggressive, repeated and constant behaviors characterized by power imbalance between victimizer and victims, in which case the intention is to harm (Uribe *et al.*, 2012; Chaux, 2012; Graham, 2006, 2012; Schumann, Craig & Rosu, 2013; Tolsma, Deurzen, Stark & Veenstra, 2013).

According to Popp, Peguero, Day and Kahle (2014), the phenomenon of intimidation has increased in recent years and today is a global concern affecting a large percentage of children, adolescents and young adults. Therefore, several countries carried out research, laws and intervention programs to eradicate these aggressive behaviors at school. For instance: Pedagogy for Peace program is developed in Spain (López, 2012), Law 045 of 2010 was implemented against racism and all forms of discrimination in Bolivia (Morales-Ayma, 2010). Additionally, law 13.185 of 2015 against bullying

was created in Brazil (Presidencia da Republica do Brasil, 2015) and an implementation of bullying prevention program called *Olweus* (Limber, 2011) stands out in United States.

In Colombian context, *Aula Paz* program (Chaux, 2012) and Law 1620 of 2012 was implemented to regulate the National System of School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human Rights (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia - MEN, 2013). All these policies and programs aim to promote peace education and harmonious cohabitation at schools, nevertheless, they remain ineffective due to an executive government problem. School intimidation is related to different individual factors such as: gender (Uribe *et al.*, 2012; Popp, *et al.*, 2014); physical attributes (Chaux, 2012; Mike & Mukhtar, 2016; Smith, 2010); sex (Bermúdez-Urbina, 2014; Macintyre & Blanco-Moreno, 2012); socioeconomic level (Castillo-Pulido, 2011; Schumann *et al.*, 2013); and ethnicity (Connell, El Sayed, Reingle-González & Schell-Busey, 2015). These factors can interact with each other and become a form of intimidation itself.

### Racial intimidation at school

Racial intimidation is characterized by the spread of rumors, insults, nicknames, taunts, beatings and group exclusion of a person –or community– who belongs to a different race or ethnicity (Graham, 2006). According to Schumann *et al.* (2013) there are community factors related to ethnicity that become a point of reference for racial intimidation in many schools, given their own cultural norms and practices (Tolsma *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, Quijada-Cerecer (2013), as well as Williams and Peguero (2013), affirm that most of the schools in the world teaching indigenous students, have entrenched ideologies of inferiority towards ethnic cultures, which can be a risk factor for intimidation.

The present research focused on racial intimidation at school because in Amazonian context you can see this kind of intimidation in the interactions

of settlers and indigenous people. Therefore, this problem may also take place at school: a shared scenario for children of different cultural heritage where they imitate these social dynamics. In this respect, Colombian and Mexican school's curriculums –as well as educational materials– may have an unintentional role in reinforcing racist ideologies and therefore racial intimidation in these countries (Castillo-Guzmán & Caicedo-Ortíz, 2016; Velasco-Cruz, 2016). Additionally, in schools from Peru there is racial intimidation related to indigenous communities from Amazonian zones due to a supposed socio-racial superiority at school (Pazos, 2015). Among these are the contributions of Williams and Peguero (2013) who studied the impact of bullying on the scope of academic achievement and the level at which students from an ethnic group, with low or high performance, are more vulnerable to intimidation due to the breaking of stereotypes.

Likewise, Schumann, Craig and Rosu (2013) found scholar intimidation primarily related to individual aspects and higher rates of racial victimization in ethnicities that are minorities in Canada than white European/ Caucasian ethnicity. In addition, Tolsma, Deurzen, Stark and Veenstra (2013) developed a project about the connection points between bullying and ethnic diversity in primary schools. Furthermore, in the United States, Méndez, Bauman, Sulkowski, Stan and Charisse (2016) investigated racial intimidation between peers, analyzing elements of prevalence, psychosocial impacts and the influence of coping strategies. Similarly, Mike and Mukhtar (2016) studied bullying and racism among school-age children in Asia and Great Britain. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize from the theoretical review carried out – and in coherence with what was pointed out by Connell *et al.* (2015) – that in Latin America little research was found on school intimidation specifically in racism related to an ethnic group.

Taking all into account, the present article provides the scientific community with an instrument

for identify racial intimidation dynamics at school through iconic narration. It has relevance because instruments available are incomplete and not deep enough to approach such a complex phenomenon: Structured interview guides, survey type questionnaires, checklists and multidimensional test-type scales, resulting mainly from quantitative research designed for students over 12 years old (Moratto-Vásquez, Cárdenas-Zuluaga & Berbesí-Fernández, 2012; Vera-Giraldo, Vélez & García-García, 2017).

Hence, within the framework of this research emerge the interest to design, validate and apply a data collection instrument that was consistent with children's development and characterized for being motivating and participatory. In addition, as described in methodological design, it was important to explore the meaning of emotional and cognitive experiences related to intimidation in 9 to 12 years old children, from a qualitative point of view. As a result, nine vignettes were elaborated with children's drawings and students were invited to talk about their personal and social experiences. The instrument and the questionnaire protocol help to give voice to participant's perceptions. More specifically we sought to answer the following research question: What are the dynamic's features of racial intimidation from the perspective of indigenous children and settlers of an urban school in Leticia, Amazonas?

## Method

### Study Design

Qualitative research approach was chosen, considered as a magnificent analytic instrument for understanding meanings through observation and listening (Pedraz-Marcos, Zarco-Colón, Ramasco-Gutiérrez & Palmar-Santos, 2014). The adopted method was the phenomenological-hermeneutic, allowing student's experiential meanings to be review and reinterpret (Ayala-Carabajo, 2016).

### Context

The study was conducted in an official urban school in Leticia, capital city of the department: Amazonas, which is in southern Colombia sharing boundaries with Brazil (east) and Peru (south). Leticia is known as a tripartite city on the Amazonas River where many indigenous people from 34 ethnic minority communities live (Echeverri, 2011).<sup>1</sup>

For its part, the school chosen is the largest in the city with four locations and more than 3,800 students of all ages. It provides education from pre-school levels to higher education, since it trains future educators in the region. Likewise, it has a wide multicultural richness in its classrooms having indigenous, Brazilian, Peruvian and settler students. For this reason, the coordination of cohabitation in school was receiving repeated complaints related to intimidation. Figure 1 shows the student school population.

### Participants

In total, 34 students of grade 5 of E.B.P were selected to participate in this study (20 girls and 14 boys; among 9 and 12 years old). Also, the director, the coordinator and 6 teachers of the school were involved in the project.

According to the study conducted by Chaux (2012) due to the highest number of school intimidation reported at this grade in all Colombian departments. This type of sampling was for convenience.

### Data collection instruments

To obtain a data spectrum, the study was developed in two phases. The first was related to

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to clarify that indigenous communities have their own language and ancestral systems of authority. Preserving their traditional and aboriginal cultures implies their separation from state and configure them as minority (Instituto Amazónico de Investigación, 2011).

instrument 1 (semi-structured interviews guide) as a filter for the second phase: semi-structured interviews and graphic record (indicating the number of school managers, teachers and students). In the second phase, instrument 2 included vignettes'

validation with the participation of expert judges, teachers, school managers and students. Moreover, application of the instrument was carried out with 20 students of both sexes (settlers and indigenous) (shown in figure 2).

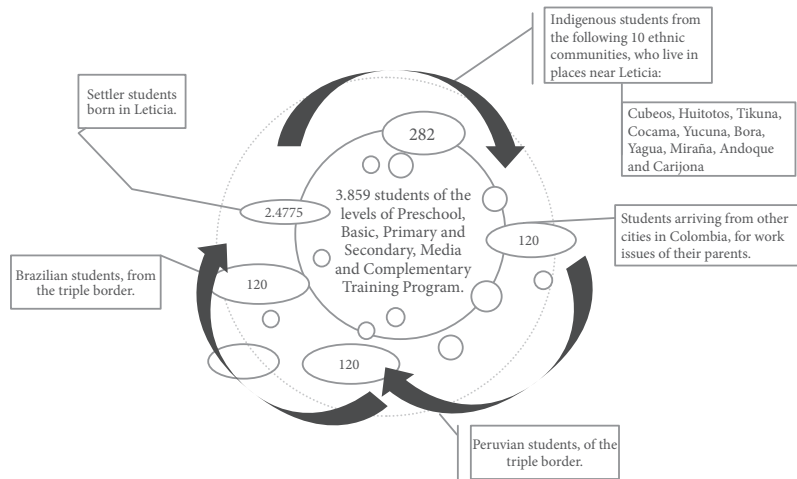


Figure 1. Characterization of the student school population (based on which the sample was selected)

Source: Academic secretary of the school.

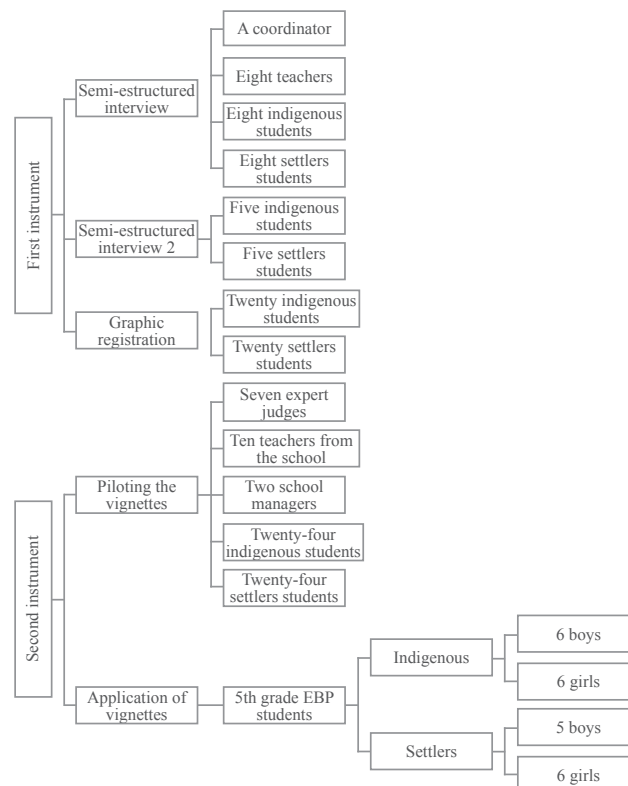


Figure 2. Participant's description classified by instruments

### Data collection instrument 1

The collection of data began with semi-structured interviews for exploratory purposes. These results justify the need to fill the gap found in the literature and the need to create an instrument to understand school intimidation dynamics. Accordingly, a second semi-structured interview with 8 open questions was applied to settlers and indigenous students. The procedure was individual and under researcher's guidance to encourage the interviewee to talk about other aspects related to intimidation dynamics and therefore explore conditions of contexts, scenarios, actors, factors and key elements for the design of instrument 2.

Likewise, a first graphic record was obtained from students who drew the school intimidation scenes they witnessed (after being asked to represent the acts of aggression they had observed in their school context). This material confirmed the results collected in the semi-structured interviews and provided more information about the repetitive and constant physical, relational, indirect and verbal aggressions that indigenous students face because of their ethnic culture, which shows power unbalance among peers.

### Data collection instrument 2

For understanding school intimidation dynamics among indigenous students, a data collection instrument was created to obtain the perceptions and beliefs of main actors such as victims, perpetrators and witnesses of indirect, relational, verbal and physical aggressions against one or several indigenous students in a repetitive and prolonged way over time (Williams & Peguero, 2013; Tolsma, Deurzen, Stark & Veenstra, 2013).

At the end of this process the vignettes emerged as a dynamic, playful and attractive strategy for data collection for the targeted population (9 to 12 years old students) than traditional data collection instruments. These vignettes represen-

ted urban contexts and school scenarios in which school intimidation could take place, such as: classroom, sports court, neighborhood, school hallways, playground and library. In short, the characters involved in the scenes were teachers, peers, aggressors and parents who could appear as supporters of aggressions in networks inside and outside school. However, it is important to highlight that in the nine vignettes a boy was personified as a victim, because men are more likely than women to be racially intimidated and suffer aggression (Méndez *et al.*, 2016). Each of these vignettes follows a logical sequence of school intimidation dynamics described by researchers from Colombia, the United States and Canada who have studied this phenomenon, as well as the researcher's knowledge and experience in working with schoolchildren. Such sequence had the following order: intimidation conflict presentation, knowledge of the conflictive situation by the support network, and change in the behavior of the aggressors.

The initial design of 7 vignettes was designed by the student Gelhem Salcedo, based on the results of semi-structured interviews and student's graphic records. The content of this instrument was validated by 7 expert judges from Psychology's Faculty of the Universidad de La Sabana, as well as by 10 teachers, 2 principals and 48 students of the school where the study was developed. Hence, the recommendations provided by these people helped the improvement of vignettes' design because the colors of the original illustrations were very strong, and they did not emphasize facial expressions, according with indigenous' physical features.

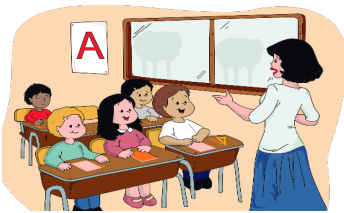



Thus, a new version of the set of vignettes was created, making sure that drawings included indigenous and settler's children interacting in both internal and external school scenarios along with representations of affection, aggressiveness, acceptance and rejection among peers. Subsequently, to ensure that these new vignettes were relevant and valid for children from 9 to 12 years old, the

instrument—initially 8 vignettes—was tested with 48 settlers and indigenous students of grades 4 and 5 of school. Table 1 shows the final version

of the vignettes and the descriptions of characters, scenarios and relationship dynamics that students formulated during the pilot.

Table 1

Final version of *the vignettes and descriptions of the students during the piloting*

Vignette	Descriptions of students
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Teacher, students and an indigenous child.  <b>Scenario:</b> Classroom.  <b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> The role of the teacher is neutral, she is teaching her students, who are happy and willing to learn. However, there is an indigenous student who is bored and physically removed from his peers; apparently, they reject him.  <b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> The vignette represents the main scenario where indigenous child experiences the first aggressions against him. Also, students show understanding of the scene (intended to reflect).</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Three students and an Indigenous child.  <b>Scenario:</b> Soccer field.  <b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> The children are playing soccer, having fun and sharing with their classmates. However, there is an indigenous child alone, apart. His colleagues reject him and do not allow him to play and integrate into the group.  <b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> The vignette shows what, according to Chau (2012), is called relational aggression towards the indigenous student. For this case, in the time of recreation.</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Two mocking children, a boy who suffers the the aggression, and the coordinator who is passing.  <b>Scenario:</b> School hall.  <b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> Some child abusers making fun of their partner who is sad because they are bullying him. Even so, new expectations are generated because an adult pass by the place of events. The piloting participants presume that the adult draws attention to mocking children or leads them to coordination.  <b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> The vignette allows to understand how children perceive the role of the adult, in the face of the aggressive behavior of the student; it also allows the identification of support networks in the school.</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> A group of children assaulting their partner, because he is different from them.  <b>Scenarios:</b> The park.  <b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> There are aggressions, they reject, push and hit a child because he is different from them. The witnesses of the event recreate and make fun of the indigenous child, who is sad and crying.  <b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> The vignette shows the physical abuse between students, the role of witnesses (who in this case reinforce the behavior of the aggressor) and the attitude of the victim in the face of aggression (Chau, 2012).</p>

Vignette	Descriptions of students
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Children.</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> Library.</p> <p><b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> All children are happy, reading, sharing and cooperating.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> This vignette allows observing the student victim of bullying in another context and in another relational dynamic. There is a change and progress in the process of socialization with peers.</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> A child with his parents.</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> The house.</p> <p><b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> A child dialoguing with his parents.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness of the vignettes:</b> This vignette makes it possible to demonstrate, through the facial and corporal expressions illustrated, the relationship that the victimized child has with their parents, in order to identify their support network.</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Children and an adult.</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> Ethnic community.</p> <p><b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> The indigenous child is happy sharing and playing with the people who love him, with their peers and their leader.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness of the vignettes:</b> The represents the indigenous child (victimized) in a context where it is accepted and welcomed; highlighting that it is within their indigenous community, with their peers, who are part of the support network that the victimized child needs to face school intimidation.</p>
	<p><b>Characters:</b> Children and teacher.</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> A lake.</p> <p><b>Dynamics of relationships:</b> The indigenous child looks happy, sharing his knowledge and a little of his culture with the teacher and his classmates, who now accept and integrate him.</p> <p><b>Effectiveness of the vignette:</b> This vignette shows the change in students' aggressive attitude towards the indigenous child, victim of school intimidation. In this vignette, one of the fundamental pillars of current education is "learning to live together". At the same time, the aim of this research is represented, which is to promote acceptance, integration and healthy coexistence in a context of cultural diversity.</p>

Once the pilot study finished, a final review was made by expert judges and the study group, finding the need to add a new vignette representing a group of teachers talking about indigenous student's behavior and academic performance, situations that provide valuable information on the coping strategies used by teachers against school

intimidation and had not been considered by researchers. It is important to address that ninth vignette, presented in figure 3, was neither tested with study group or expert judges because it came out from the recommendations they made, so it was only added to the group of vignettes, to configure the final data collection instrument.



### Organizing topics

In the process of analyzing the results, eight organizing themes were generated, which are presented in figure 4 with their respective conceptual definitions.

### Procedure for data collection

The data collection process was carried out with teachers, students and school managers through the 12 phases described in figure 5. It is important highlight that prior to each instrument application

informed consent was given to participants. The application of the final instrument was individual, and the vignettes were placed in disarray on a table and each student was asked to organize them according to their tastes and interests. Afterwards, a story was requested contemplating the basic structure of beginning, middle and ending (in 20 minutes).

At the end of narration, guiding questions were formulated to each student to gather more information: 1) How do you think the story will end?; 2) Why do you think the child is attacked?; 3) In which place the same situation can happen?; 4) Has something similar happened to you? Tell me!; 5) Do you know



Figure 3. Ninth vignette (meeting of teachers talking about the indigenous student), designed by Daniel Duran

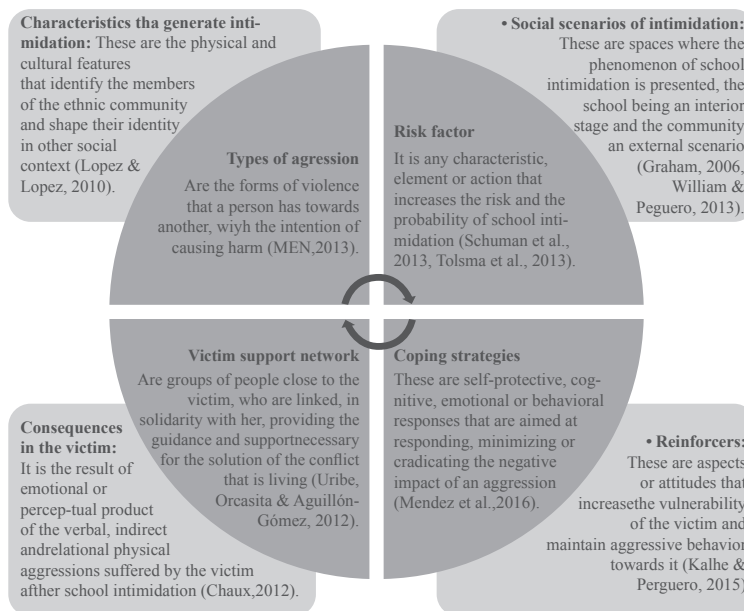


Figure 4. Organizing themes that emerged from the investigation

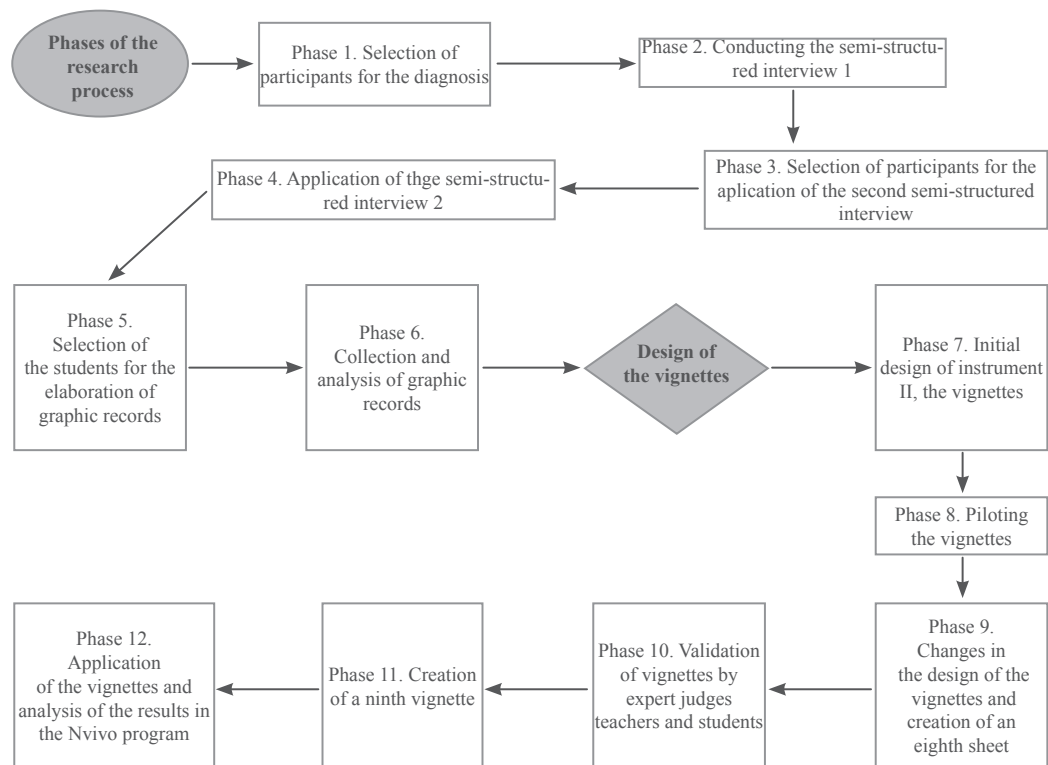


Figure 5. Phases of the investigative process

someone who has experienced the same thing?; 6) When does this happen to whom you tell?; 7) How long these behaviors occur? Was it last week or this week? What is the frequency of occurrence?; 8) How do you feel when these events happen?; 9) What do you think should be done to make this behavior does not happen again?

### Data analysis

Once the application was completed and the stories of each participant were obtained, the analysis of the information was carried out under the Network Analysis Theory (Attride-Stirling, 2001). To do this, the researchers analyze the student's stories and according to this information a first classification of codes was made based on the expressions of the settlers and indigenous stu-

dents during the application of the instrument: vignettes and storytelling. Additionally, an external researcher was invited to read the stories created by the students and reviewed –as well as the researchers– the classification of codes. Later, the basic themes were established as coherent groups of codes theoretically based. At the same time, emerging themes appeared and were compared with those already considered theoretical.

Then, they were refined in each revision until the basic themes were made and fourteen organizing themes were constructed. Finally, two expert judges from the University of La Sabana reviewed these organizers and reduce them into nine (related to school intimidation literature) and therefore global issues emerged. It should be noted that analyzing topics were triangulated with two co-investigators and two expert professors from the

University of La Sabana. They collaborated with the review and adjustments of the basic, organizing and global issues that emerged in the analysis process. Subsequently, once this first phase was accomplished, the second phase started with an interpretation of the themes that got the largest number of references and with the identification of the semantic relationships.

### Ethical considerations

To protect the rights of the participants and following the Habeas Data Law and the regulation of the handling of information contained in databases (Congreso de Colombia, 2008) as well as 1377 decree that regulates the general regime of personal data protection, informed consent was a requirement for student participation. For its application, meetings were held with parents of the children, to inform the guarantees of the participants including the ethical management of the information and who agreed signed informed consent for the children to participate in the study. For their part, the teachers and school personnel also signed the informed consent for their participation in the vignettes validation.

### Results

The results of the study are presented in table 2, including codes, basic topics, organizing themes and global issue deriving from research question. As well, figure 6 describes the relationships between basic topics and/or organizing themes that were found in data analysis. It is important to clarify that resources are the participant's stories and "references" are the frequency of codes in these resources. Also, the results presented in table 2 provide eight organizing themes that allowed us to identify and understand the dynamics

of racial intimidation in an urban school from Leticia. Below are the organizing themes with the basic topics most referenced by the students (these names are fictitious responding to the confidentiality principle).

In the first case, the topic was named "characteristics that generate intimidation" and, it was found that physical appearance of the indigenous students was the most referenced basic topic (with 12 resources and 27 references), followed by the ethnic language and proper names (9 resources, 11 references).

Considering the table of results, this topic reflects everything that indigenous culturally represents and for which they can be rejected and attacked by their peers. It is reflected in statements such as: "The Indian was not wanted because of the black color of his skin, we told him that he was shit and that he looked like a match because the tip of the match is black like him" (Pedro, mestizo student, 9 years old). Similarly, in the organizing theme "types of aggression", it was identified that relational aggression is the most used by settler students to offend the victim (18 resources, 70 references), followed by verbal aggression typified as insults, nicknames and ridicules (17 resources, 31 references). For instance: "There are some girls who make fun and invent bad things about me all the time, they tell me to: get out to your *chagra*<sup>2</sup> to plant cassava and *aguaje*.<sup>3</sup> Because of them I have almost no friends anymore" (Matapi, 10 years old, indigenous student).

<sup>2</sup> In the native language of the Amazona's Indigenous population, *chagra* means cultivation areas.

<sup>3</sup> *Aguaje* It is one of the exotic fruits of the Amazon rainforest; a sweet and sour fruit.

Table 2

Analysis of results from the global topic: Dynamics of school intimidation in a school in Leticia

Codes	Basics topics	Resources	Referencer	Organizing themes
The Indigenous speak weird.	Ethnic language	9	11	Characteristics that generate intimidation
They stay in their <i>chagras</i> .	Agricultural activities	4	4	
They have horrible names.	Surnames and proper names of the ethnic group	9	11	
They have different skin color.	Physical aspects	12	27	
They are gross and do not know anything.	Ethnic knowledge	8	11	
They do not say anything, they are very quiet.	Introversion that characterizes the indigenous	6	6	
They are of another species, from another place.	Geographic location	5	6	
They hit the <i>huitoto</i> with a stone.	Physical aggression	15	22	Types of aggression
The suitcase and notebooks are smeared with mud.	Indirect aggression	7	11	
They ridicule him and speak badly of the Bora.	Relational aggression	18	70	
They make fun of him and call him banana tree, <i>fariñero</i> .	Verbal aggression	17	31	Social scenarios of intimidation
Bathrooms, computer room, hallway, court, lounges.	Intimidation scenarios at school	10	17	
Houses, neighborhoods, streets, shops, parks.	Intimidation scenarios in the community	12	18	Risk factor's
The Indian was very intelligent that's why they rejected him.	Scope of academic achievement	3	3	
The parents told him that the Indigenous are very dangerous.	Stereotypes of parents against indigenous	4	5	
In the neighborhood, he was the only Indigenous.	Ethnic minority in the urban context	1	1	
There were three Indigenous in the classroom.	Ethnic minority in school	10	12	
Indigenous are poor.	Socioeconomic level that increases intimidation	2	2	
Indigenous smell like rotten fish.	Social prejudices	15	32	
He told his parents.	At home	16	28	Support networks of the victim
He told the teacher, coordinator and classmates.	At school	18	41	

Codes	Basics topics	Resources	Referencer	Organizing themes
His friends in the community helped him.	In the community	7	7	
I understand that other people have feelings and suffer.	Development of empathy between peers	5	6	
He is silent, does not tell anyone when they insult him.	The silence	4	4	
The Indigenous changed his look, he no longer speaks <i>cocama</i> and he dresses like us.	Effort of the victim, to adapt to the ambient.	8	11	Coping strategies
He left school and never came back.	Escape strategy, such as coping with intimidation.	8	11	
He did everything his classmates asked him.	Strategy of submission to intimidation	2	2	
He ignore the aggressions of his classmates.	Avoidance strategy to intimidation	4	4	
He told the teachers, parents, friends and coordinator.	Ask for help	5	6	
Teachers do nothing.	Unfavorable attitude of teachers	4	5	
A cousin treats me badly because I'm indigenous.	Aggressors of the family environment	5	5	Reinforcers of school intimidation
My mom cries and my dad does not care.	Lack of parent's coping skills	2	2	
Because of him the kids make fun of him.	Displacement of the aggressor's blame	2	3	
They do not wear tennis, they wear flip flops.	Lack of acceptance of differences	12	17	
Parents do not believe that their children are disturbed at school.	Lack of credibility towards children	1	1	
I stay quiet and do nothing.	Neutral role of peer witnesses in intimidation	1	1	
The Indians should not be in school, they should be in the <i>maloca</i> .	Negative perception of mestizo students towards the indigenous	12	14	
White children believe they are better race.	Negative perception of indigenous children towards mestizos.	5	7	
I felt lonely, sad, wanting to cry.	Negative emotional reactions after the aggression	15	29	Consequences of school intimidation in victims
They always reject me.	Recognition of victimization	3	4	
I used to talk <i>cocama</i> , now I do not like it.	Transformation of cultural identity	4	6	

In relation to the organizing theme “social scenarios”, the study showed that school intimidation is most frequent in the community (12 resources, 18 references), which shows that aggressive behavior among peers is not an exclusive problem of the school, it is a problem of the context instead that permeates the schools from Leticia, and where those intimidating actions that children experienced are learnt from their social context through imitation. Then, a quote that shows this problem: “In my neighborhood lives a girl from Huitota, whom the neighbors call her tomboy, her hair, and they do not let her play with their daughters” (Danilo, 11 years old, mestizo student).

In fact, according to the results, the risk factor for school intimidation that predominated in the investigation was social prejudice (with 15 resources and 32 references). These are value judgments that parents transmit to their children, prompting them to demean and belittle the cultural identity of indigenous Amazonian children. For instance: “They shouted dumb, ugly, ripped eye, smells like rotten fish, get out of here *bacú*,<sup>4</sup> and additionally they beat him because the kids did not like him just because he was an Indigenous of some community from the kilometers” (Roberta, 11 years old).

In contrast, with respect to the organizing theme “victim’s supportive network”, were detected 18 resources and 41 references showing that most victims went to school first, asking for help to teachers, coordinators, principal and then to members of the household, in which 18 resources and 28 references were found. This reflects a recognition of school authority and trust among some indigenous students and teachers. As an example, the following narrative is presented: “My companion *Muca*, warned the group leader that some children were insulting him very ugly” (Remuye, indigenous student, 11 years old).

Likewise, in the organizing theme “school strategies to cope with intimidation”, the results indicated that the most used strategies by the victims were related to forced adaptation to the environment and school dropout (8 resources, 11 references). In this way, the transformation of the victim’s ethnic identity and, at times, the self-rejection of their culture to fit into the new school group is evident. In addition, there are notable aspects of school dropout among indigenous students and the return to their community school to continue their educational process. The matter stated in the following citation: “My classmate left the school for her community, because the children called her “*chuchenta india*”.<sup>5</sup> Besides nobody wanted to work or sit near her” (Roxana, 11 years old, mestizo student).

Moreover, in the organizing theme “school intimidation reinforcers” participants highlighted a lack of differences in acceptance that increases this problem (12 resources, 17 references). It seems there is a risk of cultural diversity disappearance in this school from Leticia as well as cultural identity of indigenous children is threatened by racial intimidation. The narratives showed a resistance from settler students to accept the other, develop empathy and create environments of coexistence among peers. This was evidenced in statements such as: “We are angry because the color of his skin is different, he does not speak Spanish well. Besides, the natives do not know anything, they are gross” (Camilo, 11 years old, mestizo student). Finally, in the organizing theme “consequences of victim’s school intimidation”, it was noted that negative emotional reactions after the aggression (15 resources, 29 references) such as pain, guilt and low self-esteem felt by the victims before the aggressions, was one of the most mentioned effects by participants leading to a weakness of the coping mechanisms and isolation from social groups.

<sup>4</sup> *Bacú* is a fish that lives at the bottom of the rivers

<sup>5</sup> Popular expression to refer to a person who smells bad.

Sample of the above is the following narrative: “His colleagues hit him and told him that he was an ugly and smelly Indigenous, he felt very bad; he began to cry and said he would not go back to school” (Napuche, 10 years old, indigenous student).

### Discussion

The intimidation in the school setting is a phenomenon that presents some contradictions, associations and consequences (figure 6). At the level of network relations, the support for the victims contradicts school strategies to cope with intimidation (Abbey, 2012). This seems to happen because at school, home and community people do not provide the victims with the relevant guidance and support to develop useful and effective skills for the eradication of school intimidation.

Thus, victims used coping strategies that put their psychological well-being and school continuity at risk. For this reason, supportive networks need to be strengthened, since they are not fulfilling the function of accompanying and protecting victimized children.

Taking this into account, an association between “school strategies to face the intimidation” and “consequences of school intimidation” arises because these strategies generate problems as: perceptions and negative emotional reactions towards the other, and victimization and identity transformation (which influences the weakening of interpersonal relationships). For its part, the basic theme “victim’s effort engaging context” – used as a protection mechanism– has a relation of consequence with the basic topic “cultural identity transformation”. It was found that students felt rejection related to their beliefs, customs, ways of

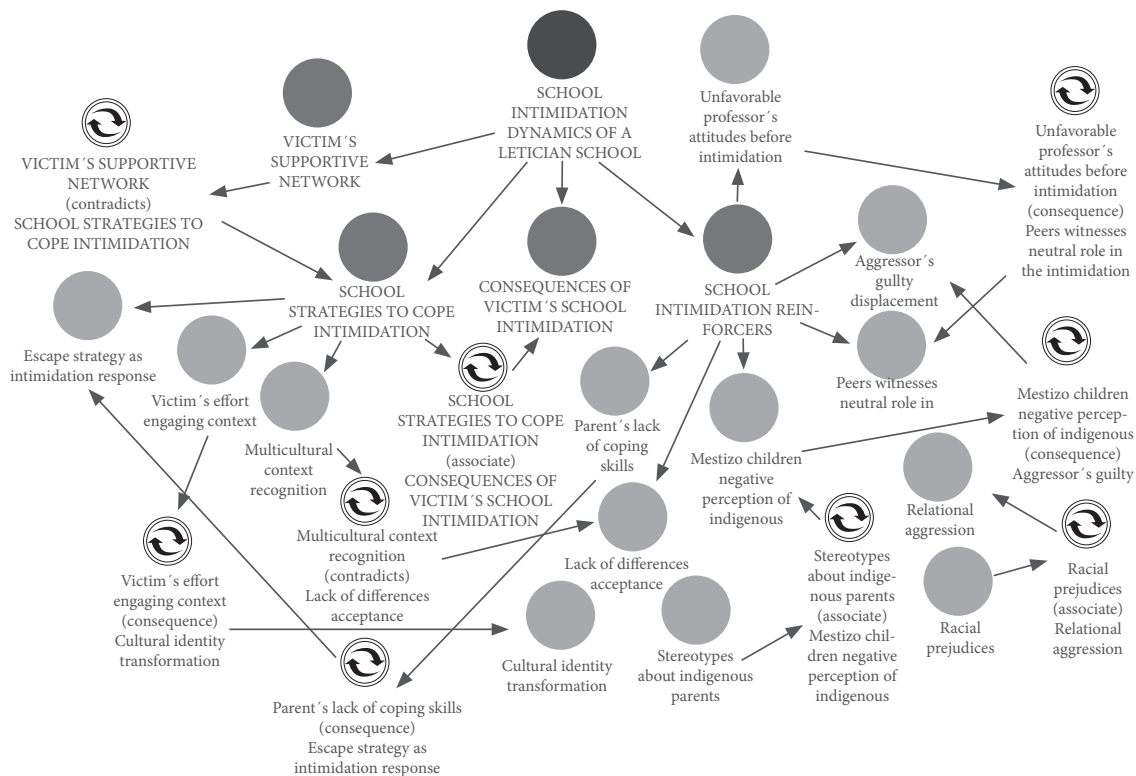


Figure 6. Network of semantic relationships established in research. Note: Arrows within circles represent relation between organizing themes, and colored circles represent global organizing and basic themes.

thinking and interacting with others due to their concern to fit in a foreign culture and be accepted in their school group. In consequence, indigenous children criticize and discredit the members of their culture, treating them badly and blaming them for the aggressions suffered at school (which is evident in the complaints that indigenous parents present to the coordination).

In summary, it was found that there is a prejudice in indigenous children mediated by their cultural and individual characteristics. This prejudice also mediates cultural relationships and transforms cultural identity as part of the process of adaptation to a new culture and avoid racial intimidation. However, the results also found that multicultural context recognition contradicts the lack of differences acceptance (Heft, 2013). This, because if settlers acknowledge the importance of children, adolescents and adults from 32 indigenous communities that inhabit the Amazonas, it would be easier to embrace and respect the ethnic diversity.

Additionally, children might be using the “escape strategy” as a result of parental lack of coping skills with the settlement process. More guidance and support to children for conflicts resolutions at school is needed. Apparently, both children and parents leave the school due to racial intimidation and return to their community. As consequence, some indigenous students experience frustration, low self-esteem and inability to cope and solve conflicts in certain circumstances. In addition, it is important to highlight that the relationship between stereotypes about indigenous parents is associated with mestizo<sup>6</sup> children negative perception of indigenous population. In this regard, it is observed that children learn by transmitting beliefs and imitating behaviors, which they tend to replicate in their closest environments.

This issue was visible in the results of this study, when schools and community contexts are

identified as scenarios of school intimidation. In this way, unfavorable teacher’s attitudes have consequences in the neutral role that peer witnesses assume in intimidation events (because some school teachers show disinterest to address, face and solve this problem). In other words, the student who is witness of the phenomenon also develops a neutral attitude towards intimidation that they observed among peers, reinforcing the aggressor and increasing victim’s vulnerability.

In this line, the relation of mestizo children’s negative perception of indigenous has the effect of displacing the aggressor’s guilt towards the victim. This attitude becomes a double attack for the indigenous students because, on one hand, they received the aggression and on the other they felt guilty of receiving that abuse because of their indigenous origin. Finally, a relationship between racial prejudice and the type of relational aggression was found, given the increase in negative racial value judgments, rejection, ridicule, rumors and isolation towards the indigenous children increased (Rodríguez-Burgos, Díaz-Posada, Izquierdo-Martínez, Rodríguez-Castro & Nassar, 2014).

### Concluding remarks

The general objective of the research is to understand the dynamic’s features of racial intimidation at school from the perspective of 20 indigenous children and settlers of an urban school in Leticia (Amazonas, Colombia). The results allow us to identify that the process of intimidation operates dynamically with several actors participating in different scenarios, with a wide variety the relationships between the school, the family, and the community (Valsiner, 2019.) The present paper went beyond the traditional investigations that have been focused on characterizing the victim and victimizer (Chaux, 2012) as the main objective and considered relationships between these features.

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<sup>6</sup> Mestizo children are those descendants of a mixture between Indians and Europeans or Africans.



Consequently, in the intimidation phenomenon—as a dynamic process—there is a participation of several systems. At the macro-level, the government creates policies that are not in line with local needs, as there is no recognition of the differences between urban and rural settings. At the meso-level, the school does not adapt those policies either, which promotes decontextualized interventions by the teachers and managers. Finally, at the micro-level, the family often ignore the problem and peers serve as neutral witnesses:

1) The government that creates policies that often ignore the reality of each region; 2) it is not the same to formulate educational policies for urban children and for indigenous children. Besides, in the *school system*, managers and teachers receive those government policies without an adaptation to their local and institutional reality. Additionally, in this dynamic, family involvement has a key role, because—sometimes—the indigenous parents ignore or deny the problem. There is also a clear participation of peers who became witnesses.

Nevertheless, in our study, we found that the same school devalues the indigenous culture and its knowledge (Tolsma *et al.*, 2013), privileging settlers and recognizing them as people of greater value and status. Hence, that dynamic permeates the relationships between friends and family. Accordingly, from the perspective of the settler participants, the stereotypes that their parents have about indigenous people seem to be transmitted to them, from one generation to another. This also generates negative perceptions towards the natives, turning into social prejudices expressed through the offensive mockery and the segregation of the physical feature, proper names, and native language (Quijada-Cerecer, 2013). In fact, Quijada-Cerecer (2013), Williams and Peguero (2013), talk about these attitudes and emphasize that most of the student's ethnic characteristics are related to victimization, reflected in relational, verbal and physical aggressions that are considered by the indigenous participants as attacks on their

dignity. Nonetheless, in the dynamics of school intimidation it was found that some peer witnesses became reinforcers of aggression when they do not report the perpetrator, as Chaux (2012) mentioned.

Besides, some school teachers and managers become reinforcers of bullying, because of the lack of coping skills, showing little interest and attention towards students seeking help. Thus, victims begin to develop coping strategies such as silence, avoidance and escape (Mendez, Bauman, Sulkowski, Davis & Nixon, 2016). According to our results this is due to the introversion attributed to indigenous culture and increase the number of indigenous students who dropout from urban schools (Williams & Peguero, 2013). It can also be related to the fact that students do not completely transform their cultural identity (Mendez *et al.*, 2016) to avoid social prejudice and to adapt to the settlers' demands. As a result, the study revealed that the cultural diversity of Amazonas is threatened by racial school intimidation because this might generate the disappearance of some beliefs, languages, customs and traditions (Connell *et al.*, 2015). Notwithstanding, one of the limitations of the study is not including parents, teachers and parents as participants, because listening all the voices of the system is relevant to understand this phenomenon (Boulanger, 2019). This approach will allow a more integrative view of the relationships in different subsystems and a more sophisticated analysis of its dynamics (Rodríguez-Burgos *et al.*, 2016; Valsiner, 1987).

For future research, it is recommended the creation of prevention and intervention programs that include all the actors of the educational communities. These should promote inclusion, acceptance, appreciation and recognition of the ethnic richness of indigenous children and families (Rodríguez-Burgos, Rodríguez-Castro & Mojica-Arango, 2012). In fact, the results of the study offer important clues for the development of educational intervention projects in schools, as well as for the design and implementation of

public policies to support the inclusion of students who are ethnic and cultural diverse.

Likewise, a transverse project that compile the importance and contributions that indigenous cultures have made is needed for the preservation of natural resources and should be incorporated into academic curriculum, increasing the appreciation of diversity and can blur racial divisions. Finally, the study should be extended to other schools and countries, to identify common processes of each culture. Without going any further, for example, we could ask ourselves, what will happen to the children who were once guerrillas and who will soon be integrated into Colombian schools. All these investigations would contribute to the development of a truly inclusive society.

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