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# What was out of the frame? A dialogic look at youth media production in a cultural diversity and educational context in Chile

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## ABSTRACT

This article accounts for an experience of digital storytelling workshops with indigenous adolescents in Chile, and proposes a theoretical and methodological approach to analyze digital creations with a dialogic and ethnographic point of view. Based on this, it discusses the possibilities of digital media production as a strategy for the self-expression of children and adolescents, particularly immersed in unequal and ethnically diverse educational contexts. The specific case of two Mapuche girls reveals complex ways of organizing and positioning their voices, where 'girl power' and 'post-girl power' discourses are relevant, but not so their ethnicity. The results show that television, with its main audiovisual genres, styles and stereotypes, appears clearly on the teenagers' creations, while the absence of Mapuche signs along the creation process and also into the digital stories seems to be related with two important features of the Chilean educational system: ethnic inequalities and its fierce attachment to neoliberalism.

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## Introduction

Some researches on media production and education suggest the potential of this practice to involve children and youth in educational activities and especially to strength their empowerment, participation and identity (Erstad, Gilje, and Arnseth 2013; Knobel and Lankshear 2010). Storytelling has been one strategy of media production that would bind together both knowledge about media narratives, and the development of critical and reflexive perspectives among students (Lambert 2009). However, this seems to be a debatable generalization. Ranieri and Bruni (2013) claim that mobile storytelling may encourage the self-expression of identities and generate collaborative practices, but also can reinforce pre-existing divisions within certain public education contexts. This happens especially in marginalized groups that are not always able to mobilize the technical, social and linguistic skills needed to fluently engage with these practices. Dahya and Jenson (2015) show how the media production of Muslim and other racialized girls is permeated by discourses that maintain stereotypes of representation.

From another critical view, some scholars have noted that it is inappropriate to understand media production as a transparent reflection of the producer. Brushwood Rose and Granger (2013) put in question the possibility of telling a 'complete' story about the self. These researchers conducted creative workshops for small groups, and they focused their attention on the contradictory process of storytelling, not so much on the story itself. From my point of view, the creation can be approached as a personal expression, but what is included in 'the personal' refers to much more complex processes than a single and straightforward identity. Underlying this, there is a deeper questioning of

the possibilities that researchers have to capture and represent in a faithful way the voice of those participating in our research, particularly when it is assumed that voice not only has a verbal dimension, but it is rather a subjective position (Mazzei 2009).

Buckingham (2009) makes several considerations for the analysis of media production that are noteworthy. He suggests considering the characteristics of the media used, the educative role of the researchers, the participants' understanding regarding the context of production and the aims of the activities of production, among other dimensions. In the research that is reported in this article there were tensions between the purposes and the way adults understood the workshop, versus how this was seen by the young participants. This tension became a determining factor throughout the processes of digital media production (Valdivia and Medina 2014).

This research draws on ethnographic observations of several multimedia workshops to promote digital storytelling in primary public schools located in low-income areas in Chile. In particular, I present the experience undertaken with students from indigenous, urban and rural contexts in a school in southern Chile. The main questions addressed are: How does their ethnical identification emerge in their media productions? Is it an important part of the 'voices' they can articulate? As it will be shown in this article, indigenous markers did not appear clearly throughout the creation processes or in the digital stories. A situation that certainly became a relevant subject for reflection and analysis.

### **Mapuche teenagers' media production and education in neoliberal Chile**

The school where the case study took place is located in a small city in the Araucanía region, an area that concentrates most of the indigenous Mapuche population. Chile's indigenous populations make up 4,6% of the national total, being the Mapuche people the largest indigenous ethnic group in the country (MIDEPLAN 2011). Over half of Mapuche youth are second or third generation urban migrants. As all the others, it has endured social, political and economical discrimination and marginalization throughout history. In recent years the situation is aggravated, because Mapuche activism against the Chilean state is represented in the public discourse as criminal and seen to involve teenagers and young adults (Bengoa and Caniguan 2011).

The marginalization becomes especially evident in educational terms. The Chilean educational system has enduring inequalities, and these are not merely consequences of a socioeconomic problem, but it has ethnic and national overtones as well. Indigenous populations undergo several educational differences imposed by non-indigenous dominant groups, and are inevitably among those most likely to fail academic years, to enter school late, and present the lowest retention figures (Winkler 2004).

Since the early '80s Chile has been a 'laboratory' for neoliberal social politics. At those initial times, the military dictatorship passed a constitution and several politics that promoted privatization, self-regulated market and high segregation. Post-dictatorship and democratic governments did not change this situation, but tried to solve the system's quality and inequality problems with contradictory politics, always within the framework of neoliberalism (Fischman, Ball, and Gvrtz 2003).

In the case of educational politics for indigenous populations of Chile, the State uses a 'double speak'. The Affirmative Action programs are settled in this neoliberal platform where discourses such as personal development, competition and meritocracy determine not only the programmatic agenda, but also the daily experiences of the individuals. Andrew Webb (2014, 2015), in his study with Mapuche students from the Araucanía region, sheds light on these tensions. His research shows how important the neoliberal framework is for the articulation of the Mapuche students' positions related to their future, civic values, and their relation with Chilean society and state, where education operates as a historical mechanism of cultural whitening. In this way, Mapuche teenagers are trapped in a gridlock between, parental aspirations and neo-liberal education processes, and the

other hand, affective and social ties to a racialized and stigmatized indigenous people (Radcliffe and Webb 2016).

In this national context of neoliberalism the media scenario is regulated by the market and there is a lack of intervention from the state in order to define educational policies related with communication and neither the development of diverse and plural contents, nor the experimentation and creation of local or community media. The efforts have been put on the development of the Information and Communications Technology. Through an alliance between the state and big multinational corporations on communication, the Internet connectivity and the consumption of digital technologies have become more and more accessible. This emphasis on the technology aspects over the cultural policies can also be appreciated on education. Specifically in the case of media education, there are no policies to address media learning and practice of children and young people. Media and ICT are mainly seemed as tools to learn about other formal school contents, and rarely as objects of study in and by themselves (Donoso 2011); they are at the service of the achievement of standardized learning and focused on the mathematics and reading and writing skills.

The school of the case study presented here is a public institution that receives approximately 300 students, 30% of whom come from nearby rural areas. Their teachers identify an important number of them as Mapuches; but in spite of that, the school does not have specific programs or action plans on intercultural education. Their approach is more focused on the inclusion of digital technologies as a powerful tool for students' learning and the development of the local community. For this reason, the proposal of a digital storytelling workshop had very good reception from the school community.

### **Digital storytelling as media production and teenage expression**

In my research I took a theoretical approach that understood digital stories as an expression of discourse, and the practice of creating and producing them as a cultural and historical experience, based on a dialogic conception of the creative act and the use of language (Haynes 1995; Voloshinov 1986).

Digital story is a means of expression related to the ancient art of telling stories, an extended genre that arose early on in the communicational development of all societies and cultures (Lambert 2009).

Digital stories set apart from oral and written narratives not only because of their visual elements, but also because they are closely related to media formats, such as television. These productions have benefited primarily from the development, proliferation and access to digital media and digital technologies.

Digital storytelling implies the development of several narrative genres, each one with its own signs and features, used in a way that reflects the author's perspective. An undeniable value of narrative is its potential to shape experience in so many different ways, a wide range of options from realism to fantasy. The creation of actual or possible worlds is inevitably related to the world we know, the emotions we feel and the experiences we live. Therefore, digital storytelling contributes to the construction of a meaningful social space in which the subjects are involved. This differs from the idea of digital story as a representation of the self, or a complete self-expression of their authors (Brushwood Rose and Granger 2013); in digital stories, they create possible worlds where they adopt different forms and positions, instead of showing themselves how they are supposed to be in their day to day lives.

### **Digital stories as dialogic texts. Genre and discursive polyphony**

Digital stories are considered a discursive product through which their authors assume a position with regard to others and their experiences; therefore, its study requires an approaching discourse as object and social practice, and Dialogism as the theoretical and epistemological basis.

Discourse is understood as a subject's social practice or form of action, organized through the use of contextualized language and accepted as pertaining to specific social roles. In this case, language is understood as semiotic structures and cultural systems of verbal or nonverbal signs. Discourse is

both the production and the circulation of texts aimed at specific objectives and in relation to the context. All productive discourse carries with it certain points of view or ideological leanings regarding what it seeks to communicate and the communicative situation itself (Calsamiglia and Tusón 2007).

Following the dialogic approach of Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov (1986), 'discourse' refers to the concrete use of signs in life, in specific social and communicative spheres, where they became significant to both the responsive quality of language (this means, the orientation to and from an 'other'), and also to the nature of discourse and utterance. For Haye, Carvacho, and Larraín (2011), Bakhtinian 'utterance' is a concrete discursive action, as it could be the semiotic contribution (verbal or non-verbal) of a speaker within a conversation; it also could be a particular novel, like a digital story. Utterance and discourse always represent the ideological positions of their creators. This is so because the polyphony that takes place through several voices within the same utterance or in the relation between this utterance and other ones always imply tension with otherness (Voloshinov 1986).

Based on the above, we can appreciate the relevance the otherness has in Bakhtinian dialogism. The other is constituent of every human experience, hence dialog, in its diverse manifestations (including the internal speech), is the primal structure of any particular existence. According to Clark and Holquist (1984), from this perspective it won't be possible to understand the opposition between I and the other as the encounter of two separate entities, the Bakhtinian self is never a whole, since it can only exist dialogically. Therefore, digital stories would reflect the polyphony produced by the interaction of the creator's position and the others.

To understand how digital stories work as a discourse it is necessary to look over the concept of genre according to the dialogical perspective. The discursive genre, with its relative stable features, shapes the layout of the ideological positions contained in a digital story. As Bakhtin suggests (2002), the several kinds of communicative activities are related to the different spheres of human life. In the case of digital narratives, they belong to the spheres of the media, with its distinctive technological resources and ways of communication. In the globalization context, through those dominant discursive genres, media have made a fundamental contribution to the creation of transcultural stories that relate, to a greater or lesser extent, with local meanings. To understand how young digital storytellers assume positions and participate in the sphere of media one must begin identifying which genre prevails in their productions.

From this perspective, the analysis of digital stories should address at least three fundamental aspects: its specific material nature, paying attention to the characteristics of each semiotic mode; the discursive genres that mold digital stories and their communicative spheres; and finally, the voices included in the narratives, their organization and perspective or the position the enunciator assumes with regard to them.

Related to this last point, and assuming that digital stories are polyphonic discursive texts in which the context is key for its production and understanding, it is necessary to provide background on the educational and cultural diversity context of youths' media productions that is presented in this article.

## Context and methods

This paper is based on the reports of an ethnographic research within 'Atrapahistorias', a multimedia workshop carried out from 2008 to 2010 as an after school activity in public schools in different Chilean cities. The specific case study took place in Villarrica, a small city in the de La Araucanía region.

Villarrica has a population of fifty thousand residents. It is located right next to a lake and a volcano. Over 60% of the population lives in urban areas, and 17% identify as Mapuche. It has a small, but important commercial area, distributed among the three main streets. Villarrica's main economic activity is related with commercial businesses and tourism.

The purpose of the workshop was to develop students' communicational skills by means of the creation of fictional digital stories. The workshop included a web site, which was used to build a profile of each group, elaborate the storyboards and exhibit the final stories. Three adults were in charge of organizing the workshop, two of them were teaching assistants in the school's technology laboratories, and the third one was myself, playing a double role as teacher and researcher. Fifteen teenagers ranging from ages 12 to 14 years attended the workshop. Most of them lived in rural areas near the city and their teachers identified five of them ethnically as Mapuche. The students displayed different levels of technological expertise: in general they lacked access to Internet at home, so their online activity was occasional and took place only at school or, to a lesser extent, at Internet cafes. At the time the research took place (2008–2010) the penetration of mobile phones in Chile was high, but not as much among this social group. For all of them, watching TV was the main after-school activity. In terms of digital skills, only a few had email and Fotolog<sup>1</sup> accounts, used online chats, or had visited music and video websites. The rest signed up and created their email accounts for the first time during the workshop.

The research methods for this study included a questionnaire to find out about students' technology use, onsite weekly observations and field notes, audio recorded data of meetings, six semi-structured group interviews with students as they finished their digital stories, informal interviews with two teaching assistants, and a personal field diary. These methods were inspired by ethnographic research (Adler and Adler 2012; Guber, 2009). The data collected from the media production material included the digital stories and photos produced by each group.

The analysis combined both inductive and deductive approaches. The data collected was classified by subject and inductively codified with the purpose of identify patterns and establish categories. In this case, the quality of the analysis is guided by the pertinence and coherence with the research questions, both the initial ones and also those that arise throughout the ethnographic research (Bergman and Coxon 2005).

Due the nature of the corpus – verbal, visual and audiovisual – the analysis could not only be guided by the categories and dimensions of the research questions; semiotic and discursive features also had to be considered. Therefore, some categories typical of the image and audiovisual analysis became relevant, such as color, framing, scene, angle or point of view. And talking specifically about the digital stories, it was unavoidable to pay attention to narrative analysis categories like plot, subject, perspective or narrative mode (Aumont and Michel 1990). The interpretation and analysis based on a dialogical perspective followed with questions like: What does the story tell? What does it respond to? Who tells the story? And to whom is it aimed?

The systematic analysis of both the process and the digital products of each group revealed something surprising: the absence of Mapuche signs in the students' productions. This was a difficulty because it confronted the assumption that there may be differences among the stories according to the different cultural contexts. In one of the groups this lack was especially evident. The two girls who comprise this group constitute the case study that I present and discuss in this paper. Their group was called *My Chemical Romance*, and as I further followed and analyzed their work, some questions emerged: Why the absence of Mapuche signs in their productions? What does this absence mean, and how to interpret this silence?

## Results

### *The creation process of my chemical romance*

The workshop team *My Chemical Romance* consisted of Juanita Pichun and María Coliman, both 12 years-old and identified by their teachers as Mapuche.<sup>2</sup> Juanita lived in the city and was recognized as the only student in school who identified herself as Mapuche. Nevertheless, we cannot assure there were no other students that did identify themselves with any ethnic background; within the daily activities observed there was no space for dialogue and expression about this issue. María lived in



the countryside, near the city. *My Chemical Romance* joined late the workshop due to a direct invitation I made to them. When the workshop began we were worried because of the complete lack of Mapuche references in the photos shot and the stories in progress presented by the students. I assumed that by including Juanita some markers of their indigenous experience might appear. María was recommended by her teacher, who thought the workshop could be an opportunity for her to further develop her communicational skills. María and Juanita were schoolmates but not friends and did not seem to have any special affinity.

Asked to present a picture that worked as a presentation to the rest of the groups, María brought a photograph of the front of her house (Figure 1). A long shot that shows only part of the façade, the framing allows us to see just the wooden walls, part yellow part white. Through the windows we can see plants inside, which give us insight into María's home. This was the first photograph María uploaded to her profile on the workshop website.

For the same assignment, Juanita chose a photo taken by a classmate. The photo is of Juanita inside the same classroom where the workshop was held and wearing the school uniform (Figure 2). Around the board there are posters and written papers on the walls.

On the final interview, Juanita mentioned that the name of the group was suggested by her and referred to a band she liked, but totally unknown to María and the rest of the workshop's participants<sup>3</sup>.

Juanita was the only one with access to the Internet at home. She was a social network user, followed her favorite bands and played games online (with special fondness for games related to the Barbie doll universe). María did not have a computer at home, and in fact, she opened her first email account during the workshop.

Juanita was the one who led the process of creating and producing the digital story and rarely shared any of the decision-making. Juanita used to talk about '*the story*' instead of '*our story*' and María seemed to be a silent participant in its creation.

Juanita's ethnic self-identification did not appear until the end of the workshop, and it did so only incidentally during the closing interview with the group to review the process of their work and each student's personal and group experience. During the interview, Juanita mentioned that she had an indigenous scholarship because she is Mapuche.

1. Juanita- Look, I am going to receive that scholarship [pointing to an article in a local newspaper laying on the table]
2. Researcher- What is that scholarship about?



**Figure 1.** Photograph from María's presentation of her family space.



**Figure 2.** Photograph from Juanita's presentation.

3. Juanita- It's the **indigenous scholarship**
4. Researcher- Why do you have it?
5. Juanita- Because **I am Mapuche**
6. Researcher- Really? Very interesting. You didn't consider telling a Mapuche story in the digital story?
7. Juanita- mmmhh [the young girl seems surprised] Possibly.
8. Research- What would that story be like?
9. Juanita- **About a girl who likes Mapuche stuff a lot.**

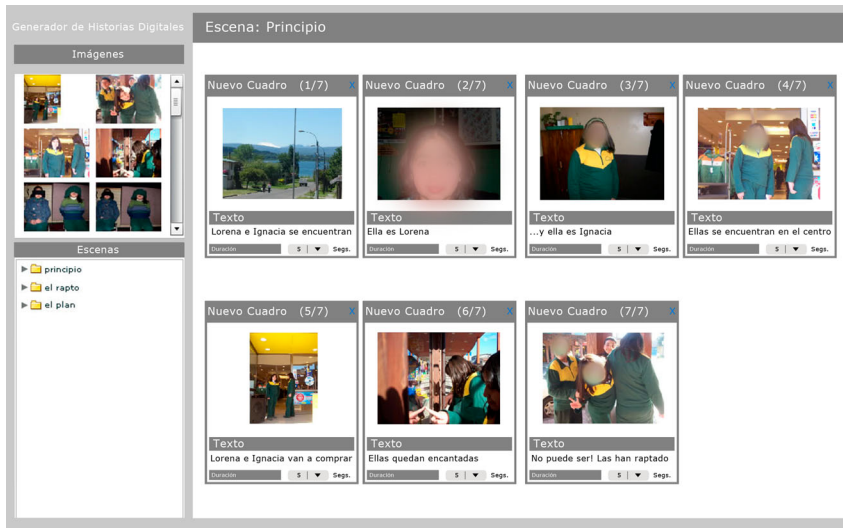
Juanita identifies herself and stands as Mapuche (line 5) specifically in reference to Indigenous scholarship that in Chile operates as an affirmative action policy. Juanita stands as Mapuche within an educational and political context. When I suggest to her that she somehow relate being Mapuche in or to her digital story, she answers with a sentence (line 9), which contains the words 'girl' and 'Mapuche'; but she does not talk about a 'Mapuche girl', not about 'Mapuche people', is just 'a girl' and some 'Mapuche stuff'. Juanita takes certain distance; her character has a sense of Mapuche identity only because of likes and preferences, but she does not seem to have a sense of ethnic belonging. This would imply that Juanita understands *the Mapucheness* as a category that explains itself, simply by name.

Reviewing this fragment of dialogue, it was the first opportunity I had to discuss the Mapuche subject with Juanita. As said before, I was told she was the only student at school who identified herself as Mapuche, at least according to what their teachers said. This absence of identification during the workshop or in her creation aroused my curiosity. The question I asked (lines 6 and 8) challenged Juanita to provide an answer, to solve my invitation/request, arguably in a collaborative or co-constructed way. In response to the questions, she made up a female character that likes Mapuche stuff a lot, only as something generic, ambiguous and all embracing. Anyway, the story Juanita and Maria created was a different one.

### ***Justice in our lives. My chemical romance's digital story***

I will now analyze the story the girls produced. This 2:21 minute digital story is an action thriller. The storyline would be something like this: 'two girls who were kidnapped by a pair of men and held against their will in a house. The adolescents were able to break free and seek revenge on their own'.

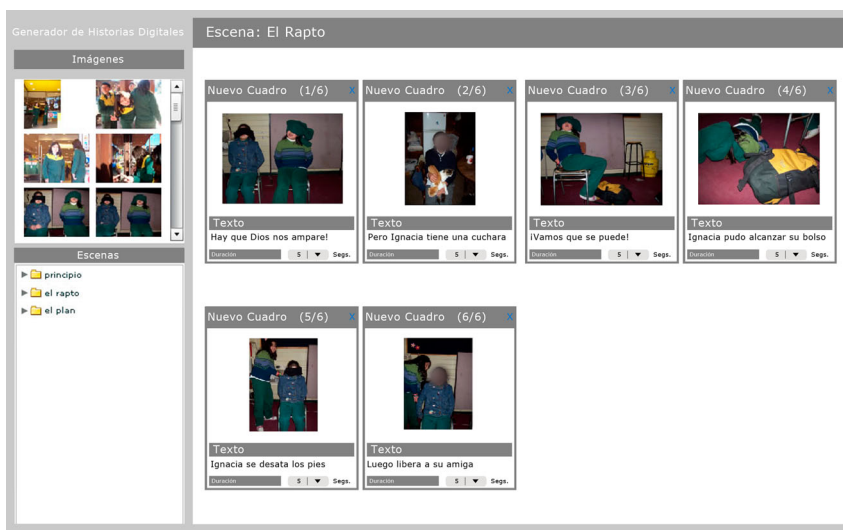




**Figure 3.** First part of the storyboard of *Justice in our lives*. My Chemical Romance group.

As it can be seen in [Figure 3](#), the *Scenes* menu of the storyboard is organized in three parts. The first, titled *The Beginning*, starts with the presentation of an open and luminous space, a sunny day and in the background, part of a lake, a volcano, trees and a truck going down a quiet paved road. The following image shows the main characters, Lorena and Ignacia<sup>4</sup>, with the photographs the creators also used in their profile presentation in the workshop webpage. Then follows a sequence of the protagonists in the city's downtown area, window-shopping at stores that sold 'very nice things' (this text was included in the final version of the digital story). These images also use open scenes and natural light. This section ends when the protagonists are kidnapped and taken forcibly out of the shopping center.

In the second part ([Figure 4](#)), *The Kidnapping*, the protagonists are tied up and blindfolded in a 'terrifying house' (text included in the final version of the digital story). The story goes on with



**Figure 4.** Second part of the Storyboard of *Justice in Our Lives*. My Chemical Romance group.

Ignacia (character acted by Juanita) being able to free herself with a ‘knife’ that she had in her ‘purse’ and also frees Lorena.

Finally, in the third part titled *The Plan* (Figure 5) the girls lay a trap for their kidnappers in revenge. They wait in hiding for them to fall into the trap, mounted with two ropes. The men fall into the trap, surprised, and end up hanging upside down. ‘They didn’t know what was happening’, says the text. The scene and story end with the image of the girls laughing while hiding.

As seen in Figures 3 to 5, the digital story only uses photographs taken by the girls, and didn’t resort to images downloaded from the Internet, as was frequently the case with the other groups. For the most part, the representation and staging are consistent with the narrative. The scene composition follows a regular pattern. Most of the images show the characters in central position, framed by long or medium-long shots, and with steady angle (e.g., Figure 3, shot 5/8; Figure 4, shots 3/8 and 5/8). All of these first examples include elements that help to identify the social and material context (e.g., Figure 3, shot 1/8). The extreme close up and the high angle are less frequent, but when they are used they make the narrative more legible; by showing this few details somehow the story appears less distant for the viewer (Figure 3, shot 1/8; Figure 4, shot 4/8; Figure 5, shots 1/8, 2/8 y 4/8).

The omniscient narrator is expressed in the final version through a written text that accompanies or describes each image, most of which are consistent with the images. For this, they use a pink font. The text is generally abundant in adjectives and adverbs.

a *beautiful* lake and a *nice* view of the volcano  
they bought *very nice things*  
*suddenly*, two *big* men appear and took them in a *very brutal* way  
a *very terrifying* house on a *stormy* rainy day  
and *suddenly* Ignacia came up with an idea  
a *very sharp* knife  
when *suddenly* they didn’t even notice

The triple use of the adverb *suddenly* coincides with the three events that break the narrative: the appearance of the kidnappers, the idea of one of the protagonists to break free and the conclusion and punishment of the antagonists. The formal vocabulary, emphasized with qualifying adverbs and adjectives, is also characteristic and particular of this digital story.

Two songs were used for the soundtrack: a romantic, melodic song by the Spanish band *La oreja de Van Gogh*, which plays throughout most of the story, and background music characteristic of

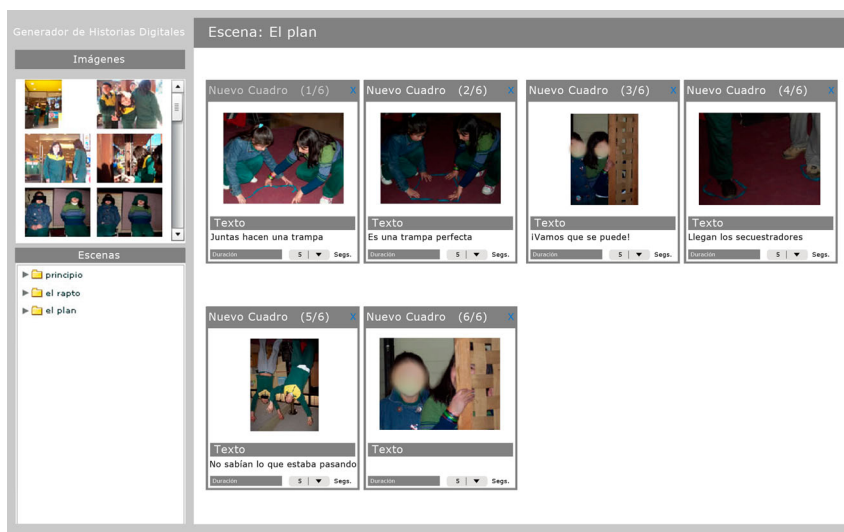


Figure 5. Third part of the Storyboard of *Justice in Our Lives*. My Chemical Romance group.

mystery films, which is included when the girls are hiding and waiting for the arrival of the kidnappers. They also included sound effects of rain and thunder during the scene in which the girls are tied up.

The style is marked by a formal, verbal narrative and a frequent use of qualifying adverbs and adjectives that add drama and suspense; it includes sound effects of suspense, and dark indoor images, with scenes of suspense at the end. All of these stylistic resources contribute to create a suspenseful climax. The feminine youth references are reflected in the pink font used in the written narrative, and the romantic Spanish song, with its sweet voice and cheerful melody, for the main soundtrack. This band was very popular among female workshop participants.

In terms of the narrative, the portrayal of the protagonists as two girls who seem happily *window-shopping for nice things* is also a reference. The composition of the final digital story as a whole reflects a coherent articulation, from the story's development to its ending, of stylistic resources associated with thrillers; the climax and conclusion are consistent with the endings of this genre. The topic refers to arguments and plots associated with a typical female stereotype of western culture: young women who enjoy shopping, but also change from being victims to become avengers, all through a clever (and harmless) trap.

For style, composition and topics, this creation can be classified within the realm of television series or fiction movies.

From a discursive genre analysis, it could be considered that *Justice in our lives* is an action thriller with references to television series, especially those aimed at teenage female audiences such as 'Buffy, the vampire slayer'<sup>5</sup>, and also Chilean TV series like 'BKN'<sup>6</sup>. Several signs of style, composition, and themes upon which the narrative is settled are relevant to appreciate it. Some of these signs are: the main character usually is a teenager who counts with special powers or can see things that most people can't. This girl is always a white girl, intelligent daring and slightly mischievous. The antagonists, on the other hand, use to be hilarious caricatures of evil or good people who become bad because of circumstances, villains with a good heart.

## Discussion

The case analyzed reflects how complex the creation of media products among young people can be. Regarding the process, we must acknowledge that our expectations as researchers, and also theirs as teachers, were not fulfilled.

Juanita was consistent with the image constructed by her teachers. She took the lead and authorship in the process of production, defining the story created according to her likes and preferences. However, this positioning did not bring up any signs related to ethnicity in the digital story. Certainly, she identifies herself as Mapuche, as her teachers reported, and also as she claimed on the final interview. However, her positioning as Mapuche may reflect an institutionalized strategy, to play a predefined role within the spheres of educational and identity politics.

The Indigenous Scholarship in Chile is one of the programmatic artifacts installed as intervention upon the conditions of structural inequality that affect indigenous people. This scholarship compels Juanita, and thousands of others, to take position with the utterance 'I am', legitimating her access to the scholarship.

That is precisely the function of the utterance within the context of the interview; however, in the contexts of the workshop or in her creation, the same affirmation does not appear. But beyond that, what implies 'to be Mapuche' in relation with the Indigenous Scholarship? One can only speculate about this, as it was not the subject of my research. As it is noted by Webb (2015), indigenous grants can have adverse effects on family and community relations, whilst also causing negative self and public perceptions regarding achievement disparities, especially within highly unequal and neoliberal educational systems.

In the digital story presented here, we find signs of the commitments and tensions the girls went through during the production outside the school context. In their narrative, they define their

positions in two different and opposed ways: on one hand they discuss and defy female stereotypes, and on the other, they seem to reenact them. María and Juanita's story presents clever women as main characters that confront crime and revert their condition of victims by means of defiant and determined actions; they produced female environments that show that adolescents can achieve anything when they put their minds into something.

It is interesting to note the complexity of the position the authors adopt throughout the dramatic development of the main characters. There is a shift from a couple of young girls who naively enjoy an urban shopping center, to astute and brave girls able to solve their predicament on their own, creatively and without violence. On the other hand, the main conflict is resolved very easily, and after the resolution the main characters appear immediately happy.

The main female characters of *Justice in our Lives* are empowered girls, capable of solving their problems on their own; therefore they could be identified as the independent and successful woman who proves that gender equality had been already achieved. This stereotype appeared during the '80s in United States, got spread mainly by the media and was denominated 'girl-power'. As Kearney (2015) notes with criticism, this stereotype denies the existence of structural gender inequalities in different kinds of society, and also compels young women to focus on reaching a success shaped by the media and the consumer society. This phenomenon is known as 'can-do girlhood'.

Some elements of this stereotype appear in *Justice in our lives*. Images of teenage girls are presented wandering around a shopping center, window-shopping with discontent; they are teenage girls who have enough power and strength to defend themselves and solve their problems on their own, even if they have to deal with threatening male adults in a violent situation. Here we face discourses about the feminine that have been dominant for the last thirty years. As it is noted by Gonick et al. (2009), 'While girl power emerged within the economic, socio-political context of the 1990s where girls could be active, in the 2000s they are now expected to be fully self-actualized neo-liberal subjects. However, the constraints of heteronormative white femininity are also firmly entrenched, though not necessarily in exactly the same old versions' (2). All of the images included in *Justice in our lives* are far from what non-white girls experience day by day. As Dahya and Jenson (2015) show in their study, postcolonialist structures related to power and representation permeate youth media productions, and can determine in complicated ways the style, tone, and topics of representation that Muslim and other racialized girls create in their own media, made in the school context. In *Justice in our lives* it is possible to appreciate the cultural and ideological norms that shape the context of the youth digital media creators, a context ruled by this 'post-girl power' neoliberal discourse, where girls assume their position based on consumption, financial independence and the self-confidence to confront violence by themselves.

Confronted with the possibility of searching and selecting their resources, Juanita and María chose basically tropes and topics typical of Chilean popular television. These tropes have some correlation with the students' sociocultural context: the city where the school is located has two large centers of meeting and socialization, the beach by the lake and the main street that gathers urban shops.

Attention should also be paid to the very limited range of images and styles of composition used by the adolescents. For example, almost every shot of their digital story are long or medium size. Something similar happens with the narrative voice in the written material as can be appreciated in the visual form, where there are no points of view that stand out clearly in the text. It is noteworthy that the workshop did not teach aesthetic and technical concepts or tools to produce digital images, as I was interested in finding more about the kind of technical and stylistic resources the students would select to create their stories.

In terms of topics we can identify violence against women, and see some relation with how this subject has increased its presence in Chilean public media during the last decade, usually connected with low-income populations; but this kind of violence crosses all kinds of class and race, and is not particularly frequent in Mapuche communities.

In terms of genre, as it was shown in the previous analysis, this production can be classified as a thriller, with traces typical from fiction TV for teen audiences. Considered as an utterance, *Justice in our lives* belongs to the sphere of television as a discursive space and, therefore, their understanding must be placed in this network of senses (Pacheco and Nascimento 2013).

As suggested Radcliffe and Webb (2016), Mapuches teenagers' positions are very complex and stressed to different forces of sense: a neoliberals system that crosses all social process, a landscape of racialization and stigmatization, parental longings and social and affective ties.

## Conclusion

The discussion in this article intends to show the complexity and ambiguity of how female teenagers articulate their voices, construct discourses, and take position by creating a digital story within the sphere of fiction media production. In this discursive practice the adult otherness, as a large category, is referred, responded and confronted as a source of strain. I am talking about adults like myself, trying to bring out the 'Mapuche' from the teenage girls, and also about the indigenous grant, through which young people can manifest certain Mapuche identification, but in many cases from a distant position. Specifically this public benefit can be seen as a contradiction, it is the adult discourse pretending to identify and compensate the young indigenous, inserted into an educational system that historically has operated as a mechanism of cultural whitening. This has also shown the tension between adults trying to find a route for expressions of indigenous identification through scholarships, mechanisms do not necessarily operate like adults and institutions hope.

In the digital story the adult otherness is accepted or confronted in a dynamic of discursive polyphony. The 'girl-power' face and reject the *other* male adult that inflicts violence on them; but this position of female power is related more than anything with a postfeminist discourse in which the neoliberal subject consumes and makes him or herself by his or her individual effort. According to the neoliberal ideal this would be the stereotype of a successful and independent woman.

As it could be seen, the media is linked to globalised experiences, and apparently, in creations produced from a transcultural perspective. The limited range of references and homogenization of content and styles in the digital stories produced in this workshop is probably due to the fact that the visual and narrative literacies of these students were also limited. To get involved in the media sphere and create audiovisual pieces is usually very attractive for teenage students, but most of them face this kind of experiences without many chances of develop experimentation or create outside of a specific frame of rules and features for each genre. Even if they have never been taught about these issues, the audiovisual narratives most popular, with their styles and structures, have determined the way people in general tell stories. Acting otherwise, for example using media and their own cultural tools in a thoughtful and creative way, twisting traditional genres and models, requires not only further knowledge of the languages and semiotic codes used in this realm, but also greater awareness about, for example, the productive dimension of media and information and communication technologies.

It should be noted that the conditions in Chile for the average teenagers to improve their digital, visual and narrative skills applied to media production are adverse, especially among those who attend the public educational system. First of all, the contents offered on television (even considering Cable TV) are quite limited, and the few networks including programs related with culture, in general or digital, cannot compete with the high promotion spread by those of pure entertainment. On the other hand, even though Internet has high penetration across the country, children and teenagers do not get adequate guidance to make the most of it in terms of developing creative skills.

The case discussed shows how important it is for the media production in educational contexts to consider a dimension of critical appreciation of different genres and communicative spheres in order to generate and develop new visual and narrative literacies. This critical perspective should address both the creation itself, and also the spheres in which the students choose or intend to participate. This becomes even more relevant if the work deals with young people in unequal positions, such as

this case. In Chile, this is especially fundamental, because there are no media education policies, and the politics about culture and communication in general are clearly oriented towards neoliberal values.

One last implication of this argument, in the field of research, is that the same thoughtfulness proposed for media education should be assimilated as a continuous and permanent exercise by researchers. These teenage girls confronted and prove wrong my original naïve position, in terms of Buckingham (2009), of assuming that their local sociocultural context would necessarily show up through clear ethnic and cultural signs in their digital stories. What was I expecting to find when I asked myself, over and over, about their being Mapuche? I did not know exactly what to expect, but I was confident that I would find clear signs of rural or local experiences and markers of self-recognition as Mapuche. As the process evolved and the productions began to take form, I soon noticed that those anticipated elements did not appear; but beyond that, I realized how ambiguous and imprecise those absent elements could be, as ambiguous and complex as the processes through which adolescents create and produce discourse. Clearly, the media production exercise of these teenage girls reflects that the potential of statements and utterance is much more polyphonic and complex than what I had supposed.

## Notes

1. This social network was especially popular among Chilean teenagers before the emergence of Facebook and the smartphone technologies.
2. Their real names have been changed to protect their identity.
3. In almost every story created in the workshop, the music and the soundtrack played an essential role of self-identification. By their selection of songs these young boys and girls show and make clear their tastes and preferences, even though it may not have direct relation with the story or the action.
4. Lorena is María's character, and Ignacia is Juanita's character.
5. In the late 90's and early 2000's this US series, along with others such as 'Sabrina, the Teenage Witch' or 'Charmed', were aired by local television (dubbed in Spanish) and cable networks (in some cases with Spanish subtitles).
6. <http://www.mega.cl/bkn/>.

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