



(MISS)REPRESENTING FEMINISM IN THE MEDIA Chilean feminist protests silenced and villainised

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KEYWORDS

*Media manipulation
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ABSTRACT

The summer of 2018 was the beginning of a feminist movement which has managed to bring about social and political changes in Chile. It has not been however, without a considerable struggle, since these protests were highly manipulated by the media, where voices and pleas were being silenced, information was being scantily provided and miss represented. This showed a feminist protest devoid of its core, which appeared as a confrontation rather than a demand for the recognition of human rights. This article presents the findings of a field research, where a different side of these feminist protests is shown.

PALABRAS CLAVE

*Manipulación mediática
Feminismo
Vacío Informativo
Representación incorrecta
Silenciar
Información engañosa*

RESUMEN

El verano de 2018 marcó el comienzo de unas revueltas feministas en Chile que dieron comienzo a una serie de mejoras en la sociedad chilena. No sin dificultad, ya que la manipulación mediática de la que fueron objeto estos movimientos, creó un vacío informativo, silenciando voces y ofreciendo una representación incorrecta de estas demandas feministas, presentando información parcial y engañosa. Así se presentaba un movimiento feminista antagonista y no uno de persecución del respeto a los derechos humanos. En este artículo se presenta la otra visión de este movimiento, obtenida a través de un estudio de campo realizado in situ.

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1. Introduction

From May to August 2018, Chilean feminism was making itself be heard, universities were closed down in Santiago de Chile and parades and protests were visible all around the city. Meanwhile, a considerable part of the media was presenting a very partial view of these protests, not unlike it can be said to be the case in many other places around the world. Newspapers and television programs were showing these seemingly savage women, hooded and with naked torsos, with sometimes partially painted bodies, rioting, destroying and painting buildings as they went along. But what were they protesting about? A great bulk of mainstream media only let us know about their anti-patriarchal protest, which on the other hand, was being presented as a mere frontal attack against patriarchy, a retaliation against an undefined to all appearance's abstract crime: just angry women raising their voices and disturbing the natural order of things. After all, in the 21st century, aren't we all equal already? There are no laws limiting women of equal opportunities in many countries. What was all the fuss about? That which was initiated as a plea for equality and a cry for help was soon miss-represented and was being portrayed and thus misleadingly perceived by many as an act of antagonism.

It was from this instance of recognition of the existing void of information that I decided to take the necessary steps to try and find out by myself what was happening in Chile. I took a plane and went to Santiago de Chile in search for answers: why were these women so fierce? What were they protesting about? Was there any difference between their feminist pleas and ours' here in Spain? Was feminism articulated in the same terms all around the world? Why was I struggling to find those answers in the net where we are supposed to have access to an almost unlimited amount of information?

Thus, the objective of this article is that of providing answers to all the above questions via qualitative research, comparing mainstream media feeds with my findings in situ. The latter being the result of talking to people, interviewing professors, students, and other members of the public who were not necessarily directly involved with the dissenting movement, in summary, anybody who would care to spare me some words. I also attended feminist meetings and protests in an attempt at better understanding the movement. Together with this, I tried to gather as much academic information as was available to me at the time, to arrive at a more wholistic view on the matter. This field research allows me to expose and prove how the media can manipulate the public's perspective on feminism through skewed and misleading reporting via a depersonalization and a vilification of the dissenting protesters.

My findings also allow me to provide feminism in Chile of a human, integrating and conciliating side to this movement it had been almost completely devoid of by the media. The latter almost merely focusing its attention on sensationalist images of rioting women, who were provoking in every possible way: providing images of naked torsos, daring women dressed up as nuns with accusative poses, painted and vandalised facades and squatted universities, the latter being to the great detriment of all the students who were not receiving the education they were meant to. Nonetheless, I could see a much more compelling side. I saw sorority being embraced, inclusivity, the defence of minority local cultures, in summary a plea for human rights and diversity and an almost unbreakable determination, a side of the feminist revolts I have almost exclusively been able to find in some academic writing (Sola-Morales & Carvajal, 2021; Zerán, 2018). In fact, since the summer of 2018, some changes have been implemented in Chile because of the people's protests, despite all the media manipulation. Overcoming many obstacles, their voices have been heard, and it is possible to see the beginning of a positive change, even if there is still work to be done.

2. Media manipulation and the miss understanding of feminism

Media manipulation is by no means a new topic and it has been widely studied and discussed (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Levitskaya & Fedorov, 2020; Marwick & Lewis, 2007). It is undeniable that its effects are capable of changing the public's opinion to the point it has been suggested it can even change the course of elections (Aral & Eckles, 2019; Badawy *et al.*, 2019; Ferrara *et al.*, 2020; Mckay, 2020; Pickard, 2017), namely the 2016 American elections when Trump ended up being triumphant, in what seemed to come by surprise to many. In our contemporary highly digitalized society, it is possible to assert that the content we access via our digital devices mediates the way many see the world, specifically by social platforms and online media (Burchell, Driessens & Mattoni, 2020; Nagataki & Hirose, 2011; Newton, 2013; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

In this article, special attention will be paid to the way mainstream media portrays feminist movements, and the effects this partial and misleading representation has on the public's opinion towards this movement. It is important at this point to consider that there exist a considerable number of studies that focus on the relation between feminist movements and social media, namely those that focus on how the media represents feminism (Gill, 2007; Mendes, 2012, 2015; Thornham, 2007; Vavrus, 2002). It is also possible to find studies that explore the way new movements are articulated through mainstream media and its relation to individual articulations on the part of feminists (Flores *et al.*, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Kingston Mann, 2014; Owen, 2014; Sola-Morales & Carvajal, 2021; Willem & Tortajada, 2021). There also exist very relevant and contemporary studies on the silencing or veneer representation of violence against women (Easteal, Holland & Judd, 2015) or their outright

delegitimization or vilification (Cabezas, 2022). The latter could be said to be the case of the feminist revolts in Chile. Nonetheless, there is little work that compares media's representation with the real feminists' pleas, and that is precisely what this article does. Initially I will present some samples of how mainstream local media barely scratches the surface of what protesters are actually demanding, and secondly, I will present the findings of a field research carried out in July and August 2018, where: interviews were carried out to both, students squatting at closed down universities and university professors, together with any other member of the public willing to talk to me, feminist meeting and protests were attended and local academic literature was also reviewed.

2.1. Miss-representing the feminist protests in Chile

The so called 'Mayo feminista' (feminist May) in Chile (Zerán, 2018; Sola-Morales & Carvajal, 2021) was marked by the closing down of the universities at the hands of their students, a revolution that ignited within a university campus but soon spread across the country. According to Palma Manríquez (2018), on April 17, 2018, the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy at the Austral University of Chile in Valdivia was occupied by students. This was a response to the indifference the governing panel at the university had shown towards several demands and denunciations of sexual abuse students, teachers and administrative staff had been victims of (Dinamarca Noack, 2019). Ten days after, the University of Chile followed suit, female students occupied the facilities demanding a resolution on a process that had been extended for too long on Professor Carlos Carmona, accused of having sexually abused a female student. The decision to squat the University of Chile was taken on April 27th 2018 during a student assembly, where around 600 students voted yes to the occupation, not only in protest for the aforementioned unsolved situation of abuse, but because they believed something needed to be done in order to deal with the real problems many more women were facing and denouncing, and which, to their natural discontent, continued to be consistently ignored at an institutional level (Blum, 2018). The Catholic University of Chile was taken on May 25th. After this, many more self-organised feminist groups followed the example.

Feminist groups all around Chile, from universities and colleges, rapidly embraced the movement and many more educational institutions began to be occupied in protest, with the subsequent result that around 50 were affected. Campuses were occupied and the teaching was temporarily stopped, Universities were closed down, feminist groups squatted in them, and *the girls* (las niñas) – as I constantly heard them being referred to, even within all female university teaching circles and students' rioters too – shared a petition ('petitorio' in Spanish) addressed to the university governors, demanding an answer to their pleas, only when these 'basic rights' were attended (that is how the items that appeared in the 'petitorio' were described by rioters), would they cease in their occupation and allow universities to restart their normal activity. Notwithstanding the way 'girls' might be understood to be patronising and perceived as even slightly offensive, I will continue to refer to the rioters as *the girls* for two reasons: firstly for the sake of accuracy, since even while interviewing rioters, they described themselves as such, and on the other hand, to emphasize and draw readers' attention precisely to that mildly deprecating term, thus, whenever I use this term I will always write it in italics.

Back in the day when the universities in Santiago de Chile were being closed down, a considerable number of mainstream newspapers resorted to a very specific way of miss-representing these revolts. This miss-representation came in the shape of a skewed and often misleading coverage of the protests, where most or all the attention seemed to be on the images taken on site, the possible disturbances and the mess these protests left in their wake.

Articles from the local media could and still can be found showing women with naked torsos and hooded faces, painted bodies and daring attitudes, a display of images of bold and seemingly antagonistic attitudes, some of them that could be considered controversial in religious terms, and report on little more than a description of what the eye can already see. This is the case in the article 'Empoderadas y sin temores: Las mejores fotos de la marcha contra la violencia machista en Chile' (Olivares, 2018) in English: 'Empowered and fearless: the best photos of the protest against sexist violence in Chile'. Despite the fact that the second line of the article points at how this revolt aims at showing the existing discontent on the part of the protesters about the situation in the classrooms, the reader cannot obtain any real insight into these women's pleas. The description that precedes the images below merely comments on the images themselves and points that there were also minor disturbances, no interviews to the protesters are available to the reader either. Images 1, 2, 3 and 4 correspond to a selection of photos presented in the Olivares' article:

Image 1. Protests



Source: Guioteca, Olivares, 2018.

Image 2. Challenging religion



Source: Guioteca, Olivares, 2018.

Image 3. Hooded women Image 4. Hooded and fierce



Source: Guioteca, Olivares, 2018.

Less 'candid' articles such as the one published by the newspaper *El Dínamo* which, I would dare to say paradoxically, under the motto *verdades que mueven* (truths that move), merely focuses on the disaster left by the rioters, in an online article entitled 'FOTOS. Así quedó El Mercurio de Valparaíso tras la marcha de la Confech' (PHOTOS. This is the state El Mercurio was left in after the Confech protest), the only information provided being that as the Confech (Chilean Students' Confederation) protesters past the historical building of the newspaper *El Mercurio*, shouting 'El Mercurio miente' (El Mercurio lies) they threw paint at the façade, providing the following image of a vandalised historical building:

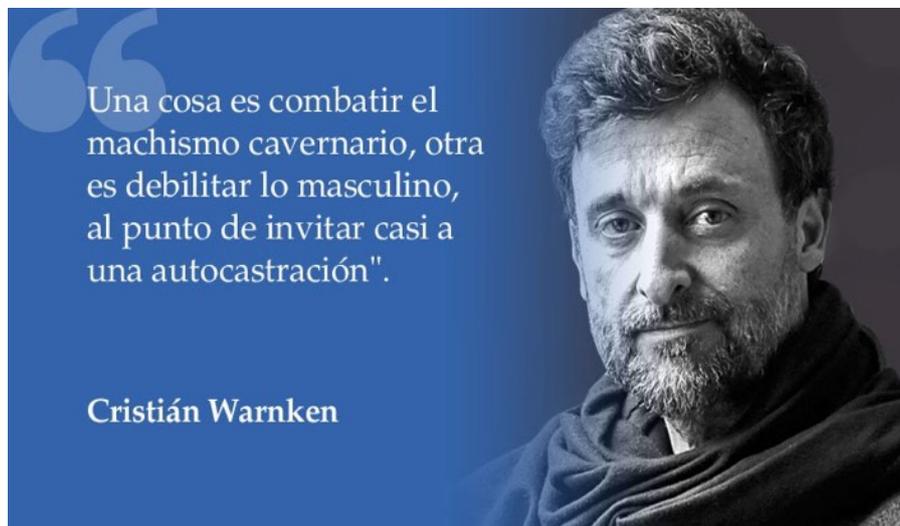
Image 5. Vandalising El Mercurio



Source: El Dinamo, 2018

El Mercurio, being one of the most prominent local printed newspapers in Chile, which tended to focus on how these revolts merely aimed at vandalising and destroying everything in their wake. Or with images such as the one below, which reads 'one thing is to combat caveman sexism, and another totally different thing is to debilitate that which is masculine, to the point that it almost invites to a self-castration'. Headlines such as this do the feminist cause no favour, since far from considering the protesters' pleas for help, they end up being portrayed as antagonistic *others*, whose main aim is none other than that of overruling the actual powers that be. These are incendiary messages that invite to a self-defence instead of to a conscious hearing or listening to the message being sent, where no room for dialogue is being promoted.

Image 6. Cristián Warnken



Source: El Mercurio, 2018

Other online newspapers which were much more sensitive to the cause, such as *El Mostrador Braga* (first online journal in Chile), gave more details about the real fight these women and men were facing, letting readers know about how these protests organised using social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The anonymous author lets us know about the existing and developing sorority amongst these community of protesters, about how they supported each other after being victims of sexist violence and letting us hear some of their voices (2018, May 16). The situation is analysed in much more detail by Horacio Blum, in *Viento Sur*. It is necessary to point out at this stage that the latter, is a political journal, not included amongst the most popular mainstream newspapers mentioned above, hence its extensive information on the matter.

Here we are told about the issues feminists manifest for and against; how they appeal for free abortion; how they denounce the 25 to 30 percent wage gap between men and women¹, being the female counterparts the ones on the lower salary; their fight against sexual abuse; the precarious situations they must endure, when 73 per cent of children outside marriage stay with the mothers, despite the wage gap; how even within working environments female colleagues are constantly addressed as 'niñas' or 'chiquillas' (girls or little girls); and how religious beliefs have favoured a subordinated female role in society. Blum finishes by expressing his understanding at the revolts, taking into consideration the difficulties women must endure in Chile.

Another interesting fact he points out is the outcome of a survey carried out by Cadem about the public's opinions in relation to the feminists' protests, where 69% of those interviewed admitted to supporting these feminist pleas, whereas conversely 71% openly showed their dislike and rejection about the way some of them marched in May 16th showing their naked breasts. Consequently, and taking into consideration the fact that many mainstream media tended to focus on the most provoking images left by the rioters, it is possible to infer, that a high percentage of population will display dismissive or non-accepting attitudes towards the protests.

Once the mainstream media has been briefly analysed, it is necessary to focus on the movement itself, why and how these protesters were raising their voices so vigorously, what they were demanding and how this social movement was being articulated, in order to be able to establish parallelisms and or discrepancies.

3. Articulating feminism in Chile

The existing social unrest in Chile in 2018, can be elucidated from the articles discussed above, but how are these protests articulated and on what basis? How were these groups of people coordinating the movement? During my time in Chile, I made it my main purpose to find out the answers to these and many more questions, it was thus I visited squatted universities and interviewed all those who were willing to talk to a random unknown Spanish woman. First, however, I believe it to be necessary to consider the possible reason/(s) for what became four months of constant manifestations and protests in Chile. Although protests cannot be said the have been eradicated straight after that, it is possible to assert that those months were of particular relevance due to the considerable number of protests and closed down universities that remained that way until favourable answers were given to squatters.

3.1. Which were the igniting factors?

Firstly, one must acknowledge that feminism is not a new concept in Chile, many feminist protests and acts of defiance against patriarchy have been carried out throughout the country's history. At the start of the 1990s, and more specifically during the first 2 decades, the seed of feminism as we know it today in Chile, started to germinate. In 1913, Belén Sárraga, a Spanish feminist of the Federal Republican Party, gave a feminist talk 'La mujer en nuestro siglo' (woman in our century) in Iquique. In 1915 Chilean writer Inés Echevarría used her privileged position as a member of the Chilean aristocracy to call attention to the problem many women faced for the mere fact of having been born female, she gave many talks and wrote several articles, amongst which we can find 'La condición civil de la mujer' (the civil condition of women) and 'La evolución de la mujer' (the evolution of women). Together with this, several women's associations were publishing their own journals, namely: *La Alborada* in Valparaiso, which was published from 1905 to 1907; in Santiago there were *La Palanca* which was published in 1908; *El despertar de la mujer obrera* published in 1914; and *La obrera sindicada* published in 1917. Focusing on more current times, we can learn that gender issues have been a part of the student agenda since 2011 (Palma Manríquez, 2018). Nonetheless, 2018 was a turning point for Chilean feminists, and its society as a result.

Moved by the above-mentioned unrest at universities and coupled with the lack of attention being paid to the sexual abuse women were being subjected to, students all around Chile began to come together. In their fight, they resorted to social media as a platform to work with their community, women and men across the country united forces and coordinated thanks to social networks such as Facebook and twitter (Sola-Morales, S., & Carvajal, 2021). Although the unrest of the female community at universities has been made clear already, we can talk about incidents which added more fuel to the already burning desire to stop the abuse. Such as the fact that females in working environments were being referred to as 'niñas' or 'niñitas' quite a patronising way to refer to fellow female colleagues already ('niñas' being the term we have already discussed as the chosen one to describe rioters), students were also having to put up with hearing male teachers humiliating them in class with comments such as: ¿Usted vino a dar una prueba oral o a que la ordeñen? (did you come to take an oral exam or to be milked?), 'cuando el hombre ve a una mujer y siente ganas de violarla, no es más que un desorden de sus inclinaciones naturales' (when a man sees a woman and feels a desire to rape her, it is only a disorder of his

¹ This being something I was told by female university teachers was a clear unspoken of fact. I actually wrote to several universities inquiring about the issue, but never got a reply. Added to this pay gap, I was also told of a greater amount of teaching hours female teachers were scheduled for, allowing them less time to carry out academic research.

natural inclinations', or 'hay que exigirle más a las mujeres feas porque las lindas, aunque tontas, igual encuentran marido, pero fea y tonta no hay quien la aguante' (it is necessary to be more demanding with ugly female students than with beautiful ones, because the latter even if they're dumb, they might even find a husband, but no one puts up with an ugly and dumb one). These are some the comments students were having to endure at the Law Catholic University as told by reporter Varas Zamora (2018). My interviews also provided incendiary material to this already enormously offending list, with sentences such as: 'Las mujeres tienen una ventaja sobre los hombres porque pueden aprobar siendo tontas' (Women have an advantage over men because they can pass exams even if they're dumb) or 'Mientras más corta la falda mejor' (the shortest the skirt is, the better) when attending an exam.

While in Santiago de Chile, I took some photos myself of some of the still closed down universities, one in particular caught my attention, since it read something really familiar to me 'Hermana, yo te creo' (sister, I believe you). I was moved by this, since I could see then that feminism was communicating across continents, there were clear shared references between Chile and Spain, given that this sentence was the one being used in support of the Spanish girl gang-raped by 'la manada', a group of 5 men who besides abusing the girl, also recorded the feat in a triumphant act of masculinity, sharing it with friends on social networks. Unbeknownst to me was then the fact that, in April 2018, a woman had also been sexually attacked by 5 men when walking by the Metro Station Ñuble in the Ñuñoa area. The alleged aggressors who were described as wearing attire from the University of Chile, had not been caught a year later as reported by Villarroel (2019). The image I am referring to is the one below, which was taken at the University of Chile, hanging from a fence of the Faculty of Sciences, image 7, as was image 8, which reads 'Against sexist violence. The female communicators mobilise. Separatist feminist assembly ICEI'.² Image 8 allows us to see how women were mobilising and doing their best to help the cause.

Image 7. Hermana yo te creo



Source: Navarro Pérez, 2018, 19th July.

Image 8. Contra la violencia machista



Source: Navarro Pérez, 2018, 19th July.

2 ICEI stands for Institute of Communication and Image, this is one the interdisciplinary institutes of the University of Chile.

A few days after taking these 2 photos I was granted an appointment with some of *the girls* squatting at the Metropolitan Technological University of Chile. I met them there, and since they were locked in, I had to wait for them to unlock the chain and allow me in. As soon as they saw me, they informed me I must have got some tear gas in my left eye, since I could barely open it, my vision was blurred, and it was watering considerably. Being quite inexperienced in these matters, when my eye started stinging, I simply thought a very vicious angry insect must have got in, and was quite surprised, and I must admit a little incredulous at first, when told my symptoms indicated tear gas contamination. However, they were clearly much more experienced and knowledgeable on the matter than myself, so I followed suit to their instructions of washing my face which clearly worked.

This little incident is mentioned as prove that Chile at that time was in absolute turmoil: constant protests were being held on the streets, not only feminist revolts but also in defence of the Mapuche community, and several other issues, which I frankly found quite difficult to keep track off, so getting one of the tear gas little droplets or particles, that must have been floating in the air, was seen as something quite common. Straight after solving that minor issue, I proceeded to ask *the girls* about their protest. Pretty soon I noticed the 4 *girls* that received me weren't locked in alone, they seemed to have a mixed group of boys and *girls*, although admittedly there were many more *girls* in proportion, who were itinerating.

Some of the squatters would go home to wash themselves or grab some food while others stayed put, I was informed. Images 9 and 10 were taken on the day of the interview from the outside. Image 9 which reads 'VETADXS LXS PACXS' actually forbids entrance to police officers. In that sentence it is possible to observe one of the ways this feminist movement was being verbally articulated. Spanish is a gendered language where feminine words tend to finish in **a** and masculine ones tend to take the **o**, for this reason, and in order to become inclusive, people began substituting masculine and feminine **o** and **a** by an **x**, now the **x** could be interchanged for an **e**, although the pronunciation was always /e/. It is also worth mentioning that the word *paco* is used to refer to the carabineros, which is the way police officers are called in Chile.

Image 9. Vetadx s lxs paxs



Source: Navarro Pérez, 2018, 21st July.

Image 10 was taken from the entrance I was allowed in order to carry out my interview. The most visible message from the outside is only partially visible from the angle I could take the photo from and reads 'Somos el grito de las que ya no están!' (We are the cry of those who are no longer with us!), which refers to all those women who have died at the hands of domestic or gender violence. It is also noteworthy the white cardboard stuck just below the yellow plastic banner around the pillar which reads 'NO PASAR' (not entry). Image 11 allows the reader to better see the cardboard message referred to, since it is possible to discern images and writing, where we can see different looking feminine faces under the motto 'la de al lado es compañera, no competencia' (the one next to you is a partner/friend, not competence). This message also exhibits one of the most remarkable aspects of these lockdowns from my point of view, sorority, that will be discussed when I share the contents of the interview I carried out.

Image 10. Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana



Source: Navarro Pérez, 2018, 21st July.

Image 11. La de al lado es compañera



Source: Navarro Pérez, 2018, 21st July.

Together with the media, Eltit (2018) points out at several possible reasons for this feminist outburst. She points to the fall of several patriarchal symbols due to different incidents, amongst which she numbers: the fact that carabineros and the Army were stealing from the state; the Soquimich crisis, a chemical and mining society that exploited Atacama's salt mines, and which was being condoned in exchange for illegal support to right wing political parties; tax frauds being perpetrated by creating fake invoices from the Chilean National Tax Office; and a certain discontent with the Chilean Church. To this already weighty list, I would add the continuous unsolved denunciations on the part of women of sexual abuse, incidents such as the one already mentioned in relation to the gang raped women, but most importantly, or so was I made to believe by the several conversations I held with people on the streets, the case of Ambar, a 20 months old baby, who was brutally abused and killed in May 2018.

After considering some of the many possible factors that may have contributed to this feminist outburst in Chile I will analyse, how and on which terms it was articulated. In order to do so, I will provide as much information as I can from the interview, I held with *the girls* who were squatting at the university. And I say as much as I can, given that part of our conversation I was asked not to share. Being extremely grateful with *the girls*, who were willing to talk to me, I will dutifully stick to my word.

3.2. How was this movement articulated?

When it comes to the articulation of these protests, I would say that it is necessary to consider different levels or articulation: the language used to raise their voices, the way people coordinated themselves to make of this a national protest, and the theoretical basis that supported their feminist pleas.

In relation to the way language is used in order to express themselves, the most remarkable points have already been mentioned: on the one hand the female and masculine letters are changed for an *x* or an *e*; and the way in which protesters are commonly referred to as *the girls*, even amongst themselves, something that may understandably seem slightly diminishing to the foreign eye. Nothing short of surprising, considering the

fierceness of their protest and paralleled with this also diminishing and patronizing term. Nonetheless, whether this was the result of them being victims to the patriarchal context's attempt to patronize them, or an effort on their part of proving how much *the girls* can do, it is not possible to tell for certain.

I will continue by sharing the contents of the interview I managed to have with *the girls* locked in Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana, which will also show the way social platforms were highly instrumental in the spread of the movement. This interview was held Saturday 21st July, 2018. When *the girls* allowed me in, and we finally settled down – tear gas incident aside – I commenced by asking them about what moved them to take the decision to close down their faculty. As they explained, there seemed to be a general feeling and atmosphere social unrest, that things weren't quite right and that something needed to be done. I was also told that during the time of the feminist outburst there was a match with Trabajo Social (another faculty) and they were hearing about yet more unanswered sexual abuse complaints, and it was a girl from that faculty that went on a Friday to visit them, she very politely asked them to empty the classroom and they decided to stop all teaching from taking place that day in order to celebrate an assembly, to vote over the possibility of closing down the university long term.

When asked about who had a vote in that decision, I was informed that only *girls* did. Nonetheless, boys did not oppose, in fact some of them were there with them as I have already mentioned. It was then, that they decided to work cooperatively and start learning about what feminism was, they informed me of how 'petitorios' from other universities were shared amongst the different groups conformed in each faculty; how they took it upon themselves to learn about feminism and then share their finding and thoughts in assemblies, celebrated between once or twice a week. At that time, 'petitorios' were being developed per faculty and then there was a general one, per university, the issue hadn't reached national level yet, although as time has proved, it was still to come. I also learnt that assemblies were also devoted to plan their next move, to discuss how to approach the Dean to present their demands and to structure their argument, and pretty much to my pleasant surprise, these assemblies were also used to exercise sorority: they would share with others their experiences with abuse, helping each other and discussing how to best help the sister in need.

In order to develop their 'petitorios', I was told that they didn't only rely on shared petitions from other feminist groups, but that they also surfed the internet, in search of inspiration, and they amusingly told me they had even read a Spanish one. It is clear the net was instrumental for them, not only in order to search for information, but also it was used as the platform on which to share ideas and inform each other about when and how to gather for protest and assemblies. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were and are still being used with that purpose.

Since I was told that the 'petitorios' were shared, I will list some of the items to be found in the one *the girls* I interviewed from the Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana wrote, where amongst the petitions it is possible to find the following: to make gender education compulsory at an institutional level; to procure a safe environment for all members of the teaching learning community; to provide a course of action to prevent anyone from being in the classroom with their rapist; parity in pay for all the teaching community; sexual and contraceptive education at university; financial and/or logistic support for feminist meetings to be held; the creation of a committee formed by students, teachers and experts, to deal with gender related issues; the creation of a cot room where students and teachers alike could leave their children while attending to their job or studies; protocols for parents to be able to miss class or an exam if they need to take care of their sick children; and to finalize the open processes opened due to existing demands put forth for sexual abuse. As well as the demands, the 'petitorio' was an instructing document, where basic notions about feminism were put down on paper, together with a glossary detailing and defining concepts such as: feminism; gender identity; sexist education; work, sexual and psychological abuse; rape; and consent. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the terms to be found in the glossary may look unnecessary, since one might think that rape is a rather straightforward term which may not leave room to misinterpretation, what this document intends to be, is a guide, a reference for the university community in general. Thus, rape is described as any kind of sexual penetration without consent, also including the case when no force needed to be used due to the victim's fear or intimidation. Something, that was believed to be compulsory to clarify. In fact, I once asked a 'carabinero' about convictions of rape in Chile, and I was told that if there were no signs of struggle, it was hard to allege rape.

During our interview I was also interested in how they understood feminism, since as they had told me, they had received no formal education on the matter. I was also informed that since the closing down of the universities there had been talks delivered at different occupied institutions about the matter, and that they were pretty much of the opinion, that 'todos deberíamos ser feministas' (we should all be feminists), unbeknowningly quoting Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book. When I told them about Chimamanda they were grateful for the reference. They explained that this was the only sensible option considering that feminism merely seeks respect towards every member of society, and equity amongst the genders, independently of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc. As we discussed this, they half chuckled about how, they had been called 'feminazis' and how some boys, who thought like them, felt offended when they were told they were also feminists. Which leads me to wonder why. Why should someone feel offended when they are identified as desiring equity for all human beings? Feminism has been miss-represented and portrayed as an insult, as something undesirable, something that going

back to Chimamanda's book she also points out (Adichie, 2014).

But, how such harmless useful for society standpoint, as the feminist one is, could be turned into something offensive? Though there might be many reasons, one possible way seems clear to me after carrying out this research: via its vilification in the media. By portraying 'wild' protesters with no clear agenda, women vandalizing the city, and what is even worst, bare breasted! An added offence! In relation to this, *the girls*, who confessed not having done it themselves, but who saw how this daring act was useful in drawing society's attention to what they were raising their voices about, seemed to be amused at how people took offence about this partial nudity. After all, as they pointed out, 'nobody gets offended to see women's flesh at the beach and on television!'. I must admit I did not watch television while there, the lack of one in the house I stayed at being the main reason, but I was told that it was common to see female bodies being highly sexualized and very scantily dressed at any time of the day, but that did not seem to offend anyone. As it has already been mentioned in relation to the survey carried out by Cadem, 71% of the people interviewed expressed their outright dislike about the nakedness of the protesters. Another proof of how semi-naked female bodies were accepted in television but were frowned upon if accompanied by protest.

In relation to this, something else comes to mind, the song 'Un violador en tu camino' (a rapist in your path) which became viral and was soon chanted by women all around the world and translated to many languages. This is a song created by *Las Tesis*, a feminist group who wrote the lyrics and created the choreography too. Despite its popularity, or perhaps because of it, this song has not escaped mockery and vilification. When it became an international craze, from Spain, I could see how social media the platform was being used to share parodies of this chant, and soon, within my social circle, I saw myself having to argue against angry and offended men and women stating the following: 'that song says all men are rapists! I feel this as a frontal attack to all men!'. Statements which had been clearly taken out of context. This song does not say by any means that all men are rapists, it plainly states that if a woman is raped, it is nothing to do with the clothes she was wearing, who she was with, when and where, if a woman is raped, the man enforcing his sexual desire is the rapist, as simple as that. Curiously or annoyingly, I see myself still doing that, in the year 2022, when I still find men and women alike stating very similar arguments, and I cannot help myself and I feel the duty to argue back, to clarify and to try and make them truly understand that neither the feminist movement, nor this song, want the eradication of men, they are not accusing all men of being criminals, quite the opposite, what we feminists aim at is equity amongst all human beings, as *the girls* themselves explained.

As well as the interview with *the girls*, I was also lucky enough to be able to attend a meeting on feminist economies, this feminist gathering took place in Valparaíso and was hosted and organized by performing artist Elizabeth Neira. Before attending the meeting, we were provided with some reading in preparation for the event, one of the main readings was Federeci's *Caliban and the Witch*. This book revises the history of witch-hunting in relation to the capitalist system and colonialism. Hence, and as it was to be expected, the speaker of this feminist gathering, Nelly Cubillos, PhD in Social Sciences and an active feminist, related to the attendants of the meeting an articulation of feminism where the key to success was linked to a return to the pre-colonial roots of the Chilean female collective. Patriarchy was strongly associated to colonialism and its religion. I was told about how, unbeknown to me, when different often international associations attempt to help feminine local groups, it is always from its often highly westernized patronizing perspective, setting deadlines and expectations on these women, which to my surprise, I will not hide my naïvity, were to the detriment of these women's desires. Cubillos, told us about how Mapuche women, and women from other local communities, were going back to bartering their goods, something their ancestors used to do and was much more in accordance with their preferences.

4. Final remarks

After considering all the above, it is possible to assert that the articulation of the feminist revolts in Chile, and its miss-representation through the mainstream media, do not seem to represent the same reality. The above mentioned skewed, misleading and on many occasions manipulating way of reporting, only but vilified a movement whose main objective was to demand basic rights for over the 50 per cent of the population: women and anybody who did not fit within the heteronormative label. It is also worth mentioning that, despite their conviction and determination, *the girls* managed to change many people's use of the feminine and masculine terminations, even though they did not change the way they were being referred to, or perhaps, this might have been something intentional, it might well be that their acceptance of the term *the girls* was a conscious effort to prove that the new generations, no matter how young, were strong empowered, thriving and determined to meet their objectives. In fact, *the girls* I interviewed wrote to me only 7 days after our meeting to let me know that 98% of their demands had been met, and today, Chile has changed thanks to these protests: this year, March 16, the Constitutional Convention approved reproductive and sexual rights in the country; four days later, a resolution was also approved by the 'Sala de la Cámara' to demand the creation of cot rooms to favour women's access to the labour market. These are just some of the achievements these feminist protests have managed to accomplish. Nonetheless, it has not been an easy process, since media vilification has muddled their pleas, making it more

arduous to obtain social support. Notwithstanding the fact that this research mainly focuses on feminist protest in Chile, it is also possible to see certain parallelism with other feminist articulations around the world, namely Spain, where 'Las Tesis' song has been presented by the media and miss-represented as an insult to all men, especially offending those, whose respect and understanding of the feminist cause is great. Thus, let us hope, that this article may serve as living prove of how it is necessary to be critical of social media, and it may encourage further research and unmasking of media manipulation strategies which divide a movement that we should all embrace. Thus, I would like to finish this article by, once again, quoting Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie stating my strong believe that 'we should all be feminists'.

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