A Case of Mistaken Identity: State and Cultural Constructions of Mapuche Womanhood Through Activism

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We in western societies believe that identity is determined by biology, reclaimed by oneself, then affirmed by the state. Often, we seek groups that identify similarly to further our mutual interests, especially when our national governments do not provide services or protect said interests. This type of organizing is a global phenomenon: Hijras lobby for government protections and benefits, women in many countries demand abortion access, and Indigenous peoples seek to reclaim their land. But what happens when these identity groups fail to meet the needs of the people within their movement? This is the case with the Mapuche women of Chile. Caught between multiple conflicting understandings of who these women are, Mapuche women have begun to lobby in their own interests to state as Mapuche women rather than as women or Indigenous people. Their activism centers on their experiences and belief that the Mapuche people and Chilean women are not a monolith with a single set of interests. While western feminists argue a similar point, Mapuche women activists are hesitant to identify with the global feminist movement because western cultures tend to believe that women in the Global South are oppressed by their cultures. Mapuche women refute this notion, as I will go into further detail later in the paper, and have created demands that draw on elements unique to their activism and some that overlap with the overall Mapuche movement.

Understanding the perception a person has of themselves is crucial to interacting with them effectively. Misunderstanding a person's identity in spaces of advocacy and representation creates space for harm against that person. I argue that the Chilean state, Chilean people, and the Mapuche people's understanding of the Mapuche women's identity conflicts with their identity, enabling their activism and depicting an idea of Mapuche womanhood that Mapuche women do not want to emulate. This paper will first discuss the Chilean state and Chilean feminists' understanding of Mapuche women's identity. I will argue that the Mapuche are used as a means

to an end, then discarded when they have served their purpose to the state. After I highlight this distortion of the Mapuche women by the Chilean state, I uncover how the Mapuche culture recognizes its people to build on my argument that colonialism and the Pinochet dictatorship created a fundamental shift in Mapuche methods of identifying each other. Lastly, I will peel back the layers of what Mapuche women believe it means to be Mapuche and how this view has come to contrast with the Chilean state and various Mapuche communities.

Chilean State and Feminist Conception of Mapuche Women's Identity

The Chilean state's conception of Mapuche women's identity largely stems from their activism as feminists and indigenous people during the Pinochet regime. Augusto Pinochet overthrew the Presidency of Salvador Allende in 1973 to create an extreme neoliberal regime within Chile (Carter 2010). The military power "liberalized trade, created incentives for foreign investment, devalued the peso, and drastically reduced social spending" (Richards 2004, 9). Pinochet's policies and executive orders had an immense detrimental effect on the Mapuche and the Chilean women; Pinochet stripped the Mapuche of their rights, confiscating their property (Mariella Bacigalupo 2018), while Chilean women lost civil, social, and political rights (Richards 2004, 9). In her article "The Politics of Difference and Women's Rights: Lessons from Pobladoras and Mapuche Women in Chile," Richards discusses three types of Chilean feminist activism she classifies as human rights, economic survival, and feminist activism. Women who participated in human rights activism are made up of all social classes to call attention to their disappeared loved ones: women of the economic survival group mostly were poor women who protested Pinochet's economic policies: and, the feminist activists participated from all classes to denounce the dictatorship, lobby with political parties, and assert women's rights.

The women's and Mapuche movements saw stunning success after the 1988 plebiscite that ended military rule. Both campaigns helped orchestrate the end of the Pinochet regime and the creation of the new Chilean democracy and instituted some of their demands into the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Concertación) 's agenda (Richards 2004, 3). The Concertación created the Comisión Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (CONADI) to address the demands of Chile's indigenous peoples as well as the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM) to address Chilean women's rights (Mariella Baciagulpo 2003). As the Mapuche women are both Indigenous and women, one might presume that both groups would work together to address the needs of Mapuche women adequately, but that is not the case. As I will further expand upon, The Chilean state subverted CONADI's ability to create institutional change to better the lives of the Mapuche and other Indigenous people. SERNAM also suffered the same fate. It was initially created to work with the Executive to "end women's discrimination in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres," but the institution has primarily focused on creating equality between men and women in the workplace (Richards 2004, 8), much to the dismay of the Mapuche women.

CONADI was created with very progressive and reparational intentions with its primary goal to transform the relationship of the state and the Indigenous people residing within it (Ray 2007). Council members consist of eight Indigenous members, eight non-Indigenous members, and a national director chosen by the President (Rodriguez 2008, 15). This council was innovative in that it "would also reflect the population distribution of Chile's main Indigenous groups…for the first time in Chile's history, its indigenous people could select representatives from their own communities to sit in a powerful national institution designed specifically to articulate their interests and respond to their concerns" (Rodriguez 2008, 6). While CONADI

was implemented with good intentions, it has taken a back seat to the Chilean neoliberal agenda (Richards 2010, 68). Cecilia Alzamora, the CONADI National Communications Officer in 2001, stated that "CONADI has little influence over government policy…When the director is politically close to the President, he has more influence" (Ray 2007, 139). Directors who oppose action by the state are subsequently removed from their position by the President so that a more agreeable director can take their place. This was the case with Domingo Mamuncure, who was the Mapuche national Director of CONADI. He "was dismissed [from this position] in 1998 because of his opposition to the Ralco Dam Project" (Ray 2007, 179). After his removal, the Ralco Dam was created, displacing many Pewenche Mapuche who have lived in the area for centuries. By moving away from this region, "they would literally cease to be Pewenche, the people of the pewen" (Ray 2007, 179). Thus, CONADI's role to protect Chile's Indigenous populace, including Mapuche women, has largely been subverted by the Concertación, and the presidents from all places on the political spectrum desire to further a neoliberal economy. SERNAM's effectiveness in acting on the requests of the Mapuche women has also suffered the same fate as CONADI.

SERNAM's political activism has not fared much better concerning state action. While SERNAM and CONADI were institutionalized simultaneously, there is no national law to protect the interests of Chilean women. Instead, the Equal Opportunities Plans (1996 and 2000) "establish lines of action that governmental agencies need to pursue in support of equal opportunities for women" (Richards 2004, 3). The Concertación essentially stamped out the fire behind SERNAM to appease the political right, moral conservatives of the Christian Democrat party, and the Catholic church (Richards 2004, 3). Because of the growing concern about SERNAM and its political intentions, "the resources and authority granted to SERNAM were

also extremely limited[.] It has little funding and cannot execute programs on its own, and thus it is expected to generate support and funding among the other ministries for policies and programs that benefit women" (Richards 2004, 7). Middle and upper-class feminists, who called for radical change during the Pinochet regime, left the movement to work within the state rather than lobby the Mapuche and pobladoras for more radical policies.

Mapuche women criticize the Chilean feminists, some even refusing to identify themselves as feminists, for constructing the women's movement to bring equality to men and women (Richards 2018, 40). Like other Latin American feminists, Chilean women bring awareness to women's issues by highlighting the differences between men and women. This directly goes against the Mapuche ideal of complementarity, where men and women engaged in balanced, genderless relationships (Warren 2009, 773). Mapuche women are also vocal about how the issues that many Chilean feminist issues are not ones they identify with (Warren 2009, 772). By attempting to unify all the women residing in Chile through their demands, the Chilean feminists ostracize the Mapuche women activists who do not align with such goals. While SERNAM and the Concertación are undeserving Chilean women by not addressing their larger concerns, the leading members of SERNAM refuse to recognize the desires of the Mapuche women.

Mapuche women are vocal about their differences from Chilean feminists and their goals. When Mapuche women unify and fight for their collective Indigenous, women's, or Indigenous women's rights, both CONADI and SERNAM fail to address them appropriately. This problem is perfectly visualized with Isolde Reuque Paillalef's trip to Beijing for the World Conference on Women in 1995. She traveled to Beijing because she "was working with SERNAM on issues and research projects to further women's participation" (Reuque Paillalef 2002, 263). Reuque

Paillalef and a panel of Chile's Indigenous women came together to present a formal document for the Beijing Conference: they created "proposals in the area of health, education, political participation, and development" (Reuque Paillalef 2002, 263) to present to CONADI and SERNAM representatives. While the conversation at the meeting appeared promising, "nobody did anything" to fund their trip to Beijing (Reuque Paillalef 2002, 263). While it was the task of the two organizations to send the Indigenous women to the conference, neither group was willing to pay to send Reuque Paillalef to Beijing. Through a generous donation of a friend, Reuque attended the convention, despite being representing both organizations.

Thus, I conclude that through the creation of CONADI and SERNAM, and the subversion of both governmental agencies, the Chilean state sees Mapuche women outside of the larger interests of the state. Instead, state officials and institutions disregard the intricacies of Mapuche identity in favor of its neoliberal interests (Mariella Baciagulpo 2003). As Indigenous people, CONADI was intended to give Mapuche women recourse for the "historical continuum of ethnic cleansing [perpetrated by the state] that extends from the nineteenth century onward" (Mariella Baciagulpo 2018, 234). Despite this knowledge and the restrictions placed in Indigenous Law 19.253, the Executive power directly undermines that. As a result, Mapuche women and men are kicked off their land and labeled as terrorists when they protest the injustice of it all. SERNAM is no better; Mapuche women's activism is distinct from the Chilean feminist's activism as the Mapuche women are not rallying to promote equality between men and women. Instead, Mapuche women utilize Mapuche ideals and beliefs to go beyond political and economic equality with men. SERNAM's goals are not representative of the Mapuche women's desires. When they express those desires, the Mapuche women, such as in the case of Isolde Reuque Paillalef, are cast aside by the very organizations attempting to advocate on their behalf.

Mapuche Collective and Mapuche Women

The state has ignored the Mapuche women, but they also experience discontent within the Mapuche community. Understanding where this discontent comes from is necessary to know how the Mapuche identify themselves and others. The Mapuche do not associate themselves with western ideals of gender and gender divisions, though Mapuche men and women "lead very different lives" (Course 2011, 10). Rather, the Mapuche identify themselves through the concept of che, or "true persons" (Course 2011, 10). In his book Becoming Mapuche, Magnus Course argues that for one to become Mapuche, they must form relations with others through the "sociality of exchange" (2011, 25). Thus, Mapuche personhood is not innate, but a "status attributed by others through both linguistic and nonlinguistic practice" (Course 2011, 25); one can only be che or not che. Only those with the capable human physicality are considered che; these traits include the "autonomy of thought, intentionality, and the capability of social action and reaction" (Course 2011, 25). Those who do not possess these capabilities are not to be true persons. Whites are not considered to be che, but set apart as winka because they are not hospitable; Course's informant, Miguel, stated, "they do not even greet [us], they do not treat [us] like a person" (Course 2011, 29). Drunk people and babies are not che, but only temporarily. Once Mapuche children develop a capacity to respond socially, they become a pichiche (little person) and exercise a degree of autonomy to explore without parental supervision…undertake learning processes…and initiat[e] of social relationships while participating in sociability" (Murray et al. 2015). Drunk people need only become sober to resume their status as true persons. Personhood and autonomy are integral to Mapuche culture, and one can only maintain their personhood through the sociality of exchange. I argue that the Mapuche women recognize each other's personhood through cariño; without the reciprocality of cariño and the sociality of

exchange by other community members, Mapuche women must occupy an unequal place in society.

Cariño is a Mapuche practice of "being there" for their friends and family that "shapes both caregivers' and care receivers' senses of self and social personhood" (Murray et al. 2017, 368). While any Mapuche person can participate in the exchange of cariño, it is the primary way Mapuche women maintain their personhood. There is no divide when concerning childcare. Mapuche men watch the children and brew mate; but, they also engage in the sociality of exchange through exchanging wine with one another, which Mapuche women do not practice (Murray et al. 2015; Course 2011, 29). Therefore, cariño, the act of care and receiving care, is integral to the identity of Mapuche women. They exist in a "constant state of awareness" to lend support and ayudar to those they care for without being asked. The practice of cariño is dependent on not being asked to help complete a task for another. However, the events of the military dictatorship transformed Mapuche's interpersonal relations. Where interactions between Mapuche peoples rely on equality and sameness, the dominant culture's ideas on manhood and womanhood created a divide between Mapuche men and women.

At the time where Mapuche activists were fighting the Pinochet regime, Mapuche leaders adopted a practice of past Mapuche warriors, called caciquismos, "in which they have a right to multiple [sex] partners" (Reuque Paillelaf 2002, 11). Isolde Reuque Paillalef does not believe caciques to be equitable anymore because present-day conditions make the practice impractical. Mapuche people "do not have the economic means" to support multiple partners; so, "if a man has [multiple] women, they end up supporting him instead of the other way around[.] He's acting like a pimp" rather than a leader who has their people's best interest at heart (Reuque Paillalef 2002, 228). While the lonko position in Mapuche communities is not a gendered role, it

is filled by men more often than not. At a time where there was such political strife, many Mapuche women sought opportunities to advocate on behalf of their people. One Mapuche woman, Marissa turned to her Mapuche community to educate herself on the part of her heritage she never experienced, but others discriminated against her for; she found a natural affinity for traditional medicine and became a *lawentuchefe* (a traditional healer) (Richards 2018, 42). Other women founded and ledvarious activist groups. In these group settings, Reuque Paillalef noticed a "lack of recognition [and] devaluation of women in the communities. Even though they did everything...they were generally relegated to second-class positions as secretaries, treasurers or program directors" (2002, 227). Though the Mapuche women were considered true persons and "respected...they were not valued for their strength" during the Mapuche movement (Reuque Paillalef 2002, 227).

In the context of the budding democracy where Mapuche women had to assert their rights as women and Indigenous people, Mapuche women had to step out of the framework of che to address the issues at hand adequately. While Mapuche identity as culturally constructed does not account for sex, Mapuche women believe that their communities must acknowledge the sex differences to remedy the harms caused by the Chile colonization, the Pinochet regime, and the current Chilean state. The present-day understanding of che has morphed to allow variation in interpersonal interactions because of the dominant culture's concept of gender. To combat the sex divide in Mapuche communities and state inaction on their demands, Mapuche women have created their own advocacy organizations to unite around such shared issues.

Mapuche Women, Identity, and Their Rights

The needs of the tribe are still valid in the context of the women's lives, for they are members of the Indigenous group. Mapuche women identify with the concerns of their kin on

issues such as (but not limited to) sovereignty, national recognition, and autonomy because they "see their interests as being connected to those of their people, a people who possess a particular worldview and distinct cultural practices" (Richards 2005, 206). They did not break off from the Mapuche movement but created organizations with other Mapuche women to address their concerns. One reason for the Mapuche women's activism to include their rights as Indigenous people and as women is because they "do not separate gender from other aspects of their identity[.] For them, gender combines with race, class, and nation to coproduce the particular modes of domination and resistance that they experience" (Richards 2005, 209). These women do not consolidate facets of their identities to analyze how each piece works alone; instead, they adopt a holistic approach to their activism to represent their identity accurately.

As discussed previously, the Mapuche did not identify people in terms of gender, but as che. Reuque Paillalef believes that while "in traditional Mapuche communities women's dignity and participation ha[d] always received the utmost respect…when this kind of participation gets integrated into the sociopolitical organizations of today, women get marginalized (2002, 232-233). Elisa Avedaño, another Mapuche woman activist, notes that "if we see a mobilization of the Mapuche people, [the women] are going to be the ones on the frontlines" but are still marginalized within the movement (Richards 2005, 207). Reuque Paillalef organized on behalf of Mapuche women with twenty-four other women to found Keyukleayñ pu Zomo (Women Helping Each Other) in September 1991 (2002, 223). While various Mapuche women's organizations have different goals and ideas, Keyukleayñ pu Zomo's primary "object was and is to dignify women" (Reuque 2002, 223). Carolina Manque's nongovernmental organization, Aukiñko Zomo (Voice of the Woman) has a similar mission: they organize "to the extent that women can be on better footing, more valued, more recognized" (Richards 2005, 210). Mapuche

women often speak of restoring women's dignity when discussing their reasons behind advocating for fellow women in their communities. The primary way they seek to reintroduce the respect and equilibrium that permeated traditional Mapuche communities into the present day is through complementarity.

To create a society reminiscent of past Mapuche practices and understanding of identity, Mapuche women advocate for the adoption of complementarity, among the desires of their Indigenous activism. Complementarity is the idea that "equilibrium should exist between the man and the woman, and [with] nature and everything that surrounds [the Mapuche]" (Richards 2005, 213). The Mapuche believe in balance amongst themselves and nature, so they have to counteract the division caused by their culture westernizing (Rapiman, Richards 2005, 213). Adopting complementarity as an activism approach may appear to be the women glorifying the past, but Mapuche women recognize the need for a more contemporary interpretation of the past practice. The way the Mapuche view themselves and each other encourages them to see feminism as antithetical to their cultural identities, thus furthering the divide in Mapuche communities rather than remedying it. The contemporary use of complementarity allows Mapuche women to describe their intentions to their fellow community members through their own cultural terms.

Because the Mapuche women occupy a distinct place in the Chilean political discourse, Reque Paillalef argues that the women's organizations "must always be autonomous...women must be the ones in charge of the decisions, the planning process, and the activities themselves" (Reuque Paillalef 2002 232). As discussed previously, it is not enough for the Mapuche women to align themselves with SERNAM or the Chilean women's movement because the Chilean women do not recognize their "particularities as a social group" (Manque, Richards 2005, 210).

The Mapuche women take a stance on equality that calls "for attention to multiple forms of oppression and power differences among women resonates with the transnational feminist critique…[as well as] the collective aspect of their claims" (Richards 2005, 211). Combining the demands of the Mapuche communities for recognition and rectification of past harms with the notion that Mapuche women should occupy a more visible place in Mapuche society is a logical approach from the Mapuche women to identify the foundation of their activism and to apply it to their lives. To restore equilibrium, it must occur between the Chilean state and the Mapuche, as well as within the Mapuche communities.

Conclusion

Mapuche women experienced discrimination from the Chilean state and people within their communities through the Pinochet regime. The former did not respect Indigenous rights or sovereignty, while the latter used their position as leaders in Mapuche societies to create a gender division. The fall of the military regime and the seventeen years of organizing did not drastically improve their situation within either society. Contemporary activism work done by both Mapuche activist organizations and Chilean feminists fails to address the complexity in Mapuche women's identity. For these women, any movement that separates the facets of their identities is incomplete because each piece works in conjunction with each other and is thus connected to any harm they face. Activism rooted in singular identity politics can attempt to remedy past wrongs while simultaneously upholding other systems of oppression (we see this in the Black Power Movement). Mapuche women have spent decades doing activist work in the hopes of restoring balance to the Mapuche not just at the state level but also intra-culturally.

Their concept of Mapuche identity draws upon traditional desires for equilibrium within the Mapuche communities. The Mapuche women have not addressed their needs through one

lens but combined all relevant lenses to create an equitable solution for themselves. I have argued that their situation is a case of mistaken identity. In the case of the Chilean state, officials would rather serve the interests of the dominant culture at the expense of the Mapuche peoples, believing that Chile's Indigenous population. The Mapuche have internalized Spanish and Chilean gender roles and ideas to create a gender system where there was none. The identity crafted of the Mapuche women by these two groups does not reflect the image the Mapuche women have of themselves. Their movement is an effort to not only reclaim their rights in both spaces but to challenge the narrative concerning who these women are. These women take a solid stance to reclaim their image in all spheres, so one day, there need not be any confusion on who these women are and what they stand for.

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