Interwoven Voices: Identity and Mapuche Textile in a Commercial and Religious Context

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Abstract
Religion and textile art are two of the main issues of Mapuche culture and identity. Both (religion and textile) have changed deeply in recent years. These changes, influenced by foreign institutions (i.e. Pentecostal Church), playing an important role in the process of construction of the ethnic and cultural identity. This paper is based on an ethnographic study of Mapuche weavers from Chile. We propose a dialogical approach of different positions assumed by them in a context in which art, religion and tradition are articulated. The results show a complex interweaving of positionings and voices in the identity construction of these women. An analysis of how those voices and positionings coexist (creating tensions) is presented, questioning the idea of a homogeneous image of the group.

Keywords: Identity, dialogical self, ethnicity, Mapuche weavers, ethnographic studies

INTRODUCTION
In the last decades, one of the main issues in identity studies is regarding the multiple representations of the self (Hermans 2001, Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). In this paper, we present a study with Mapuche women weavers in order to explore multiplicity in identity. In this context, aspects of collective and individual identity turn in conflict. To answer the question of what the influence of social and individual aspects is to the identity processes, different theoretical and methodological approaches have placed identity on one of these poles (social or individual), or in transit in a continuum between them. The context, in which most of the Mapuche communities of Chile live, is characterized by social scenarios with complex interweaving groups and greater cultural heterogeneity than ever before. It is expected that in these networks, where different individuals and groups come into contact, they continually redefine and construct their identity. In the indigenous groups, intra and extra-group relations are strongly marked by processes of classifications and social categorizations that complicate the identity context in which they are carried out.
Classically, in social psychology, the processes of identity construction were approached from the study of social categories suggesting that the individual, in the pursuit of that identity, slips by categorizing within a continuum in which his sense of belonging goes from the pole of the individual to the group or also at the intergroup level (Tajfel, 1981). That is, the self could be defined at different levels of abstraction (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994), sometimes from the sense of *individuality* and others in terms of their membership to some groups over others outside. Currently, new theoretical approaches in psychology raise the possibility of identity mixtures. Some theoretical approaches in psychology propose to understand the individual and collective self as representations that prevail over one or the other, or interact without primacy on the part of one of them and without being excluded from each other (Spears, 2001). Hermans' dialogical self theory (DST) (2001) proposes a model that would enable understanding of these relationships. Following Bakhtinian *polyphonic* metaphor, Hermans (2001) conceptualized the self in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of *I* positions. Accordingly, the *I* has the possibility to move from one position to another, a movement that enables obtaining a variety of perspectives about the world (Hermans, 2001; 2004). In contrast to the idea of an individual self, the dialogical proposal assumes several "I-positions" that can be occupied by the same person. Hermans contrasts a notion of "multiplicity in unity" (2008, p. 189), with the idea of a self as an indivisible unit, classically sustained in psychology. It would coincide--as based on Bakhtin's ideas--with the notion of a multiplicity of voices. The unicity of self in this case, which does not deny a multiplicity, would be given by the different positions to be assumed without losing the *continuity* of the *I*.

In the case of Mapuche weavers presented here, we can observe how different voices (religious, commercial, traditional) are articulated under the traditional image that these women represent. This article examines the tensions and the ways in which such voice encounters occur, understanding, as Van Meijl (2006) proposes, that these identity processes are constituted ‘in’ and through different models of cultural identity. Our research problem assumes that these different positionings are sometimes so different that they come to be in opposition, producing key identity phenomena such as the ones we are looking at below.
METHOD

An ethnographic fieldwork was carried out for two years (September 2010 to June 2012) with different cases of female Mapuche weavers whose ages were between 40 and 65 years. Over this period, on-site visits of 15 or 20 days were completed for each case. These kinds of strategies have been defined in psychology as quasi-ethnographic or micro-ethnographic studies (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988; Silva & Burgos, 2011). The advantage that was sought with a micro-ethnographic study was focused on the study of a particular activity such as the loom, allowing a ‘selective information strategy’ (Silva & Burgos, 2001). We consider that the process of construction of a craft object cannot be understood as a cultural manifestation isolated from other daily activities of its creators. Following Greenfield’s work (2004) with knitters of Chiapas, We took the weaving as a measuring instrument to study cultural values as implicitly expressed through interactions and artefacts of daily life (Wagner, in Greenfield, 2004). Thus, ethnography was projected from the outset as a favourable way of approaching this study, by complementing (at the time that greater confidence was achieved with participants) casual conversations, formal interviews and second source information (Greenfield, 2004). Different techniques of production data analysis were used (i.e., participant observation; collection of oral sources through informal conversations or semi-structured interviews; audio-visual and photographic documentation).

The method of analysis attempted to identify the diverse positions that were assumed and the voices participating in the multiple identity constructions. The levels of analysis that emerged were: the material, where these positions and voices were analysed in the construction of the textile as discourse production; and contextual, where the articulations of these positions and voices were analysed with regard to the weaver’s activities within different institutions such as religious, commercial and cultural.

The material collected (audios, field notes, videos, etc.) was analysed following proposals for dialogical analysis of positioning such as Hermans (2001) and also proposals for dialogical analysis of discourse such as Larraín and Haye (2012) and Larraín and Medina (2007). According to these authors, for the social sciences and especially for
psychology, within the framework of a discursive analysis it would be fundamental to apprehend the subjectivity present in every discourse. This type of analysis allows ‘an approach to discourse that since its conception is defined by its emphasis on subjectivity. Thus, it is an approach that understands the discourse as intrinsically linked to the social life’ (Larrain & Medina, 2007, p. 6). According to Larraín and Medina (2007), this type of analysis also ‘enables the investigation of the process of co-construction of subjectivities in interpersonal discourse’ (p. 32).

Participants: The Weavers

The four participants of this study were Mapuche women with ages ranging between 45 to 65 years (see Table 1). They live in suburbs (near country zones) of Araucanía of Chile. These women came from a lower social class (from the income point of view), where textiles is the best economic activity. Furthermore, all original names were replaced by fake names in order to keep them anonymous.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Below we describe some specifics facts about each woman in order to support a better understanding of their social context.

Veronica learned to knit with a Mapuche grandmother during her childhood, who was the one who raised her. Nowadays, she has changed her Mapuche beliefs for those of the Evangelical church, in which she participates actively. In the circuit of Mapuche textiles, other knitters consider her one of the best, being recognized as a “maestra” (master). She knows the techniques of Mapuche weaving in depth, its symbology and meanings. She has stopped weaving the Mapuche symbology because in her new religion is not allowed. Veronica demonstrates some degree of conflict with this situation.

Maria learned to weave when she was a child, from her grandmother and an aunt (both Mapuche). In her adolescence, she acquired, from old women, the main knowledge
about typical techniques and Mapuche symbology. Eight years ago, she left the Mapuche religion to become Evangelical, an action that distanced her from her family of origin because she is harshly challenged by change.

Josefa learned during her childhood with her grandmother and mother. She acknowledges having fulfilled the necessary rituals to become a Mapuche weaver. Josefa identifies her textiles as "very traditional", and at the same time, she weaves for commercial purposes. Josefa only weaves with old looms, in the patio of her house, sharing the space with her granddaughter and parents. Even though, she recognizing she works with economic goals, the main goal is to keep the tradition like the old weavers did.

Estela was part of several organizations and foundations devoted to the sale of textiles and today she has become an exporter of his own work to the United States and Europe. She learned, from her maternal grandmother, the traditional techniques of Mapuche weaving, and she proudly tells us that she also had to pass the initiation ritual. She has been recognized by UNESCO for her traditional work.

RESULTS
In the next section we describe the main findings for each subcategory. Interview results are detailed by emphasizing in participants narratives.

The Religion Warp

One of the most important textiles for the Mapuche woman is trariwe. The trariwe\(^1\), as a "semantic container of great amplitude" (Mege, 1987, p. 89) used affirming the body for everyday women, is key to female identity in Mapuche culture. It is complex to construct and "has a sign structure that surpasses any other textile within the Mapuche culture" (Mege, 1987, p.89). Both by the influence of the new commercial rules and of the Evangelical churches, the construction of this one has been changing. On the religious side, change is lived through the meanings that are transmitted. One of the symbols present is

\(^1\) The Trariwe is used like a girdle. For more details of this piece, review the works of Pedro Mege (1987, 1989).
the lukutue (see Picture 1), a central figure in the Mapuche worldview and religion with multiple meanings and interpretations ranging from anthropomorphic to phytomorphic.

One example of changing in Mapuche textiles, is caused by the minister of church in Veronica’s area, who believes that the lukutue is a devilish symbol and has asked her to stop weaving it. Veronica feels great pride in being one of the few current knitters who knows how to do it, however she said: *This was the first thing I did* [pointing to the lukutue of an old trariwe] *and this* [on a new one] *is not the same as the other one.* Notice that *here’s* the [old] bell and *here’s* a [new] cross. With Veronica, we can see a tension between pride and fear respect to the new religious meaning of the symbol.

For instance (in her own words), ‘*do not want to get too involved in this piece of weaving,* I teach it, but I see it like a common textile. A Mapuche monitor explained this to me: she was like a winged bird that hides its head and is transformed in different ways. *That’s like witchcraft and I do not want to get involved in*. More in line with the Mapuche religion we find Estela and Josefa, the first comments about it: *"The lukutue is a drawing that only the Machi can use, because it is sacred […] I could not use it because it makes me tense, I could not be able to walk peacefully, it stings, it makes me feel uncomfortable, angry".*

[INSERT PICTURE 1 RIGHT HERE]

**Picture 1.** In the image, we can see a trariwe woven by Maria. In the lower and final section, the image of the Lukutue is observed.

Although all these women present themselves as Mapuche weavers, Estela and Josefa, the two that are not evangelical, follow customs more closely related to the worldview of their people and explicitly defend the respect for continuing to weave with symbols and colours that represent their values as such. Their stories about how they are

2 Machi is a kind of shaman in Mapuche culture.
firmly maintained in this type of textiles are accompanied by gestures and expressions that show pride. Such is the case of Josefa, when asked about the interpretation of Evangelical minister of lukutue, she responded to loud laughter "it's that these (people) know nothing about anything." In the case of Veronica, it is observed that evangelical beliefs have triumphed over the Mapuche ones because she says that she has stopped knitting it due to fear. However, in the analysis of their textiles we find two examples of a special articulation between the Mapuche and the evangelical. First, despite her stating that she no longer weaves that symbol, from time to time she creates some lukutue. She tries to correct this transgression to the evangelical indications by changing a part of the symbol (the "belt") for a cross. Secondly, this strategy of symbolic change is also carried out with another of the trariwe symbols: treng-treng. This symbol represents serpents that embody the struggle of opposing forces in the Mapuche worldview. Also, because it is considered evil by the minister, Veronica weaves a treng-treng incorporating vegetable leaves to the body of the snake, thus avoiding conflict by transforming in phytomorphic terms: "So there I argue that this is a flower" (Veronica).

Taking into account what has been analysed up to this point, we can observe that a way of life attached to the typical Mapuche customs is accompanied by an attitude of defence and maintenance of identity aspects of the people and vice versa in the case of Maria and Veronica. As for Josefa and Estela, greater identification with these customs coincides with levels of attachment to them and for the defence of textiles that suffer from misinterpretations. In Maria and Veronica, we find a growing evangelical participation and a progressive alienation from the Mapuche traditions. However, as shown below, these implications are not present in the other scenario observed or in the four cases analysed.

The Commercial Warp

The marketing of Mapuche textiles has been increasing in recent years thanks to foundations that bring together hundreds of weavers from different areas. This leads to a series of changes in the way weaving is done and taught. On the one hand, the teaching has gone from individual (mother to daughter or grandmother to granddaughter) to group workshops. On the other hand, strict rules of clothing are imposed, promoting the use of
natural colours and exact size measurements never before used in typical textiles. Before these rules, each weaver had to make a decision about where to circulate their own work, because a typically Mapuche intense black (only achieved with industrial dye as it has been woven for a century and a half) is not acceptable for these foundations.

On this point, what Estela says is relevant: "Each ñimin has meaning, and it is a huge amount of work, and it the price paid is not its worth. Look what happened to the people who make the ñimin, they make small ones ... but there they are selling themselves, so, in order to sell ... I don’t sell myself! I innovate, I sell more flashy, more colourful products... ". Estela explains that she prefers to stop doing the traditional thing that satisfies her economic needs in order to safeguard those sacred textiles by preventing them from being sold (at a low price) to any public and giving them a bad use. However, at another time, she agrees that "I am not paid for the ñimin [...] because I have a great need to survive, so the traditional ones do not pay off, I work hard and I will not get paid the price that I ask for." As can be seen, in the position assumed by each weaver before the weaving rules, the receiver of the garment influences. Mary gives an example of this, "depending on who is ordering it, because my mom likes pink for nguillatún... and this is achieved with dye... but the [name of the foundation] does not accept these colours from me. The old lady who taught me the trariwe also had this colour [pink] for Ngullatún, too, but for the foundation, these [pointing to natural yarn], if not, they are not sold... ". There is a substantial difference between the two, and that in Estela this decision-making, the preference for the modern, is lived with tension and conflict accompanied by a visible discomfort and discomfort, but it is solved by convincing themselves that it is necessary to make a living. In Maria there is no such conflict, she can move calmly and without tension with the change of rules and without thinking much about who will become the bearer of her work.

Veronica earns more money in the foundations of the commercial circuit where she teaches workshops. While fulfilling one of her goals, which is to earn a living through

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3 Ñimin: Mapuche tissue technique with which trariwe is made.
4 Nguillatun: one of the main ceremonies of the Mapuche people.
textiles, she also achieves something important for her: that the tradition of the Mapuche loom is not lost. It shows great concern that it will continue and not be lost from generation to generation. What is relevant in this case is that while she is a great knower of the ancient ways of weaving, she teaches in the workshops according to the new rules that these foundations impart. In addition, although she worries about teaching symbols even though her minister does not allow them, she does so in her new version more in line with the evangelical vision. Josefa, considered an old hand of the place, is who maintains a position of stronger rejection of the new colours proposed by organizations. She says that the trariwe of her mother and grandmother had industrial dyes and she will continue to do so: "I learned it from them". The interesting thing is that Josefa has been one of the main instructors of these organizations and taught according to the new rules because they "paid very well."

DISCUSSION
Unwrapping
We could identify and characterize three positions from which each case is presented in this Mapuche textile circuit: the traditional Mapuche weaver; the evangelical weaver and the merchant weaver. The traditional type is characterized by the articulation and monitoring of those mandates received by an alleged tradition loaded with ancestral knowledge. In turn, this positioning is also observed when new weavers follow new rules but, considering these currently as typical Mapuche, is assumed to be woven from a tradition. That is, whether new or old rules, the typical Mapuche label implies, that when woven from this position, it identifies with the category of traditional Mapuche knitter. The second positioning, the evangelical one, carries the religious mandate and the evangelical voice as a rule to modify or govern those Mapuche symbolic components that contradict a Christian vision. When weaving from this position it does it altering, suppressing content, sometimes with guilt or in some cases without awareness of the contradictions that it implies. This positioning is not explicitly endorsed to a particular category or identity label, rather it is a hidden voice that sneaks through a general category of Mapuche weaver. The commercial positioning is assumed with regard to third parties who value the textile from various points. It may be foreign trade value, as well as fair price foundations, or from
those members of the Mapuche community who commission their garments for the typical use and customs. This positioning betrays contradictions in unrealized appreciation ranging from the recognition of those who sell a lot to be good knitters, to those that feel guilty by delivering an identity assets to a market that ignores that value. The latter ‘taking’ position creates opportunities for to recognize (putting in value) a specific identity: master weavers recognized based on the quality of their work; workshop weavers, in the case of newly integrated or textile art through foundations that promote their sale.

Given this range of possibilities for positioning and the various identities that are associated with them, it is worth noting that all these women, when asked how they would define themselves, they position themselves under the same category: Mapuche Weavers. Asher and colleagues (2006) argue that the identity of a group transcends the level of individual minds and is therefore a social phenomenon: the members of a society share certain representations referred to the group as a collective (Asher, Wagner & Orr, 2006). It was observed in the cases studied that these shared representations (in the sense of Asher and collaborators) are always clear before the possibility of being differentiated from one another. For instance, in situations where, as a researcher, we asked them to categorize themselves, or when they participate in an event as a representative of a culture and indigenous art, In these situations, it is noted that ascribed identity is based on the definition of an us against each other (researchers, other people, buyers) or alterity. The latter operate both as a point of reference, of recognition, of acceptance or exclusion for the self itself, either it enters into tension with that other or is defined through relations with it (Lalagianni, 2009) as we discussed below. Therefore, we think that this first level of identity construction was observed, responds to the type of process of social categorization in which a "unification of objects and social events in groups that are equivalent with respect to the actions, intentions and system belief of an individual"(Tajfel, 1981, p. 282). From this theoretical guideline, we might consider this process as a guidance system that helps create and define the place of this group of Mapuche weavers in society. An example of this is the experience of fieldwork, and during the first contacts with each participant: the existence of enthusiasm and effort on the part of these women to present themselves from their collective identity, both as Mapuche women and Mapuche
weavers. Such self-definitions are carried out in a scenario that encourages them, since from this positioning it is easier for them to present themselves before the world than before and to frame them in that position. A sample of this last point is the way in which the commercial organizations that gather them present them in the sales circuit: under a more stereotyped and traditional image than the one observed in more every day and familiar spaces (see Picture 2).

[INSERT PICTURE 2 RIGHT HERE]

**Picture 2.** Image A shows how they introduce themselves in the context of organizations and foundations promoting Mapuche textiles. She dressed in their costumes and ornaments typical seeks to represent under the *traditional* image of the Mapuche woman. In image B we can see that their aesthetic appearance, when they are in their houses is like that of any other non-Mapuche woman.

Delving into the analysis, and considering more subjective aspects, we could say that this group consensus masks certain tension through the homogenizing category of *Mapuche weavers*. As it has been presented in previous sections, within this same category there are aspects of identity linked to different religions and varied commercial contexts. What has been observed is that these positions cross each other as alterities generating tensions, especially when they are not compatible with each other (i.e. Mapuche vs evangelical).

Greater tensions in identity configurations are simultaneously observed when ascribed to various collective identities (Mapuche or Mapuche Weavers that are at the same time Evangelical) or between them and individual aspects of mother-livelihood economic from home type. We checked in ethnography and these women are assuming and articulating, in everyday and cultural context, different positions of the Self, whether more linked to the collective or the individual. These results in a multiplicity of positions or voices that allow those various positions to go to assuming without losing *continuity of self* (Hermans, 2008). Continuity does not deny the existence of conflicts and tensions between those voices or positions, conflicts and tensions that can be expected when dealing with
voices from different cultural perspectives (cf. Guimarães, 2011; Simão, 2016). For instance, when asked by the variety of textiles produced from different ideological or religious positions and which of them are recognized as Mapuche, Estela said, "because everyone ... if they have been woven by Mapuche women."

These articulations are not free of conflict in the meeting of traditional and commercial voices. We have seen that, according to tradition handed down from their grandmothers, some typical colours are achieved with industrial dyes prohibited by organizations fair price. Thus, by participating in the commercial circuit, the new rules lead to the incorporation of atypical colours but are achieved naturally. This leads, in every weaver, to take a position based according to who the recipient of the garment (Mapuche or foreign), the use that will be given and the circuit where he will deliver the textile (family, close group or business). In the homes of these women you can be seen typical and modern textiles, traditional voices and representatives of trade respectively. While some of the weavers of this study may be closer to the traditional way of weaving and other modern, in all them these voices are crossed it in various ways: Estela, who could be valued as having more knowledge has ancient modes weaving, and also is manifestly very respectful of the Mapuche values, it is also who else is most involved the commercial circuit. She travels to the US for export contracts, attends courses marketing and foreign trade without abandoning Mapuche rituals and customs. In Estela we find a multiplicity of positions: traditionalist, merchant, export, master around activity Mapuche loom. We found that her sentence: "I innovated" realizes this multiplicity. To Hermans, a central feature of the Dialogic Self, it is the "open to innovation" (2008, p. 192). Being able to take on new positions, or go combining, allows to obtain new information. By taking different positions are reached different perspectives, which are varying through direct exchange with the social environment. This game multiplicity of positions seen in our four cases: Estela is the clearest example.

Religious voices apparently present a scenario of higher tensions and contradictions. Carlos, Lonko\(^5\) of the zone where Mary lives, says that this year will nguitallün around

\(^5\) Lonko: Head or leader of a Mapuche community.
twenty families. The year before this study, it was attended by fifty-one, and more before already of seventy families. According to Carlos, the Evangelical pastor (formerly Mapuche) has banned families attending because this party is considered a satanic rite under the gaze of his church. In conversations with this Lonko a strong pessimism against the increasing power of new religious institutions are warned. “Before it was because of the Catholic Church, and now it is because of them. He [referring to the pastor] was Mapuche, I don’t understand why he says that. Before I could talk to him, but now he doesn’t want to because I do not speak the word of God”. In the weaving of Veronica, we see that something similar happens, two voices in contradiction, and one of these, the evangelical, ends shaping itself in the product. Theory of dialogical self-proposed that in these situations of power differences among the groups, dialogic relations would be reduced to monological, i.e. that part ignores or mutes the voice of the other part (Hermans, 2012). We warned of two situations by watching Veronica’s textiles; the replacement of sacred symbols Mapuche (Mapuche or traditional voice) by others with neutral meaning (nonsense invented new designs more than the aesthetic) or the modification of such symbols from the incorporation of elements which allow interpreted it without the demon load (incorporation of the cross to lukutue or leaf to change a snake by a flower). In the first example, we find the situation proposed by Hermans, the evangelical voice silencing the traditional. However, in the second case we can find three movements positions. Veronica is one of the few who knows how to weave these symbols, thus against others that legitimizing that position and a textile handle with this symbol, she responds by doing. Facing a sales order of these symbols, it is carried out from a trading position, but to work it and build it comes from a traditional because it is the necessary knowledge. This traditional evangelical voice contrasts with the prohibition and fear, solving such tension with the alteration of the drawings. This is an example of a polyphony of voices that make up the dialogic self these knitters. In Maria, the other evangelical knitter, the dynamic is different. Maria’s traditional voice is very weak, she does not know the meanings of the Mapuche symbols because nobody passed them on to her, she only learned the mechanics of how to make them and the aesthetic form. Therefore, she does not live the contradiction of voices because, in her, the traditional voice does not threaten the evangelical, solving such tension altering the drawings.
CONCLUSIONS

The processes of the Mapuche identity of the weavers carry out multiple possibilities of positioning the self. This multiplicity meets in a unit that can be identified under the heading of Mapuche weavers. The first process we identified is one that is constructed under this tag that names the group. It is a building process of group with dynamics described in theories about social identity. They described that in situations where group members organize around similarities and similarities (in our case, Mapuche surnames, textile activity, inhabited area), is allowed to perceive greater homogeneity and proximity between members (Dasgupta, Banaji & Abelson, 1999; Yzerbyt, Corneille & Estrada, 2001). Furthermore, this homogeneity is better understood, from an intra and extragroup point of view, when the group in question is pursuing a common objective in this case may be selling textiles.

However, we see that in this homogeneous image that is represented in the group of Mapuche weavers, the analysis of each case delivers a complex phenomenon of multiple identity constructions. We observed a complex interweaving of voices and positions in the daily life of every knitter. They coexist, sometimes complementing each other and (in other cases) creating tensions and differences that call into question the homogeneous image of the group. Such tensions would be of the change processes themselves (and especially when we refer to areas where there is a strong cultural heritage) as described by Van Meijl in which the new emerging identities are characterized by a paradoxical revival of cultural traditions (Van Meijl, 2006; 2012). The paradox in this case is the task of maintaining activity and identity that encompasses it, while each has a variety of differences in tradition that such activity declines in the universe. Thus, this study shows that group identities are underpinned by the subjectivities that support them, which are dynamic and complex identity differences and are sometimes diverse between alleged members of the same group.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS
The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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Picture 1. In the image, we can see a trariwe woven by Maria. In the lower and final section, the image of the Lukutue is observed.

1344x727mm (72 x 72 DPI)
Picture 2. Image A shows how they introduce themselves in the context of organizations and foundations promoting Mapuche textiles. She dressed in their costumes and ornaments typical seeks to represent under the traditional image of the Mapuche woman. In image B we can see that their aesthetic appearance, when they are in their houses is like that of any other non-Mapuche woman.