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Social identity and polarisation on social media around the satire of power regarding Chilean police violence[1]

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand the construction of social identities on social media in a context of strong inequality, through discourse analysis of the satire of power. This satire referes to acts of violence committed by the Chilean police. This research explored 1,303 comments associated with police satire videos shared on social media, which together formed a textual corpus for the analysis of these discourses. These comments were published on a popular digital platform between 2019 and 2024. The discourse analysis was conducted using a critical approach. Results suggest that the discourses comprise four main analytical dimensions: (1) identity in resistance, (2) conservative identity, (3) identity in fiction, and (4) Latin American identities. It is concluded that there are discourses on social media that contribute to the construction of social identities that denounce acts of violence carried out by State agents, allowing the establishment of a common narrative that constructs identity, nevertheless, it is also possible to observe dynamics linked to polarisation processes in other groups which reaffirm violence and authoritarian regimes.

Keywords: Social identity, Social media, Polarisation, Satire, Political psychology

Identidad social y polarización en redes sociales en torno a la sátira del poder sobre la violencia policial chilena

RESUMEN

En este estudio, el objetivo es comprender de la construcción de las identidades sociales en los medios sociales en un contexto de fuerte desigualdad, a través del análisis del discurso de la sátira del poder. Esta sátira aludía a actos de violencia cometidos por la policía chilena. Exploramos 1.303 comentarios asociados a videos de sátira policial en medios sociales, lo que en su conjunto construyó un corpus textual que formaron los discursos. Estos comentarios fueron publicados en una famosa plataforma digital entre 2019 y 2024. El análisis del discurso se realizó utilizando un enfoque crítico. Los resultados sugieren que los discursos comprenden cuatro dimensiones analíticas principales: (1) identidad en re-

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sistencia, (2) identidad conservadora, (3) identidad en ficción e (4) identidades latinoamericanas. Se concluye que existen discursos en medios sociales que contribuyen a la construcción de identidades sociales que denuncian actos de violencia realizados por agentes del Estado, permitiendo el establecimiento de una narrativa común que construye identidad, pero también es posible observar dinámicas vinculadas a procesos de polarización en otro grupo que reafirma la violencia y los regímenes autoritarios.

Palabras clave: Identidad social, Redes sociales, Polarización, Sátira, Psicología política

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INTRODUCTION

Chile is a worldwide example of inequality, where wealth is concentrated in a minority elite, while large groups of working class live with the adverse consequences of inequality (Barría, 2022; Chancel et al., 2022; Gálvez, R. y Kremerman, M. , 2021; Barriga, F. y Kremerman, M., 2021; Barriga, F., Durán, G. y Sato, A., 2023; Garrido-Vergara, 2020; Palma, 2020), and in October 2019 social uprising took the streets of major cities to exposes the widespread discontent with the unequal status quo. The police and military forces provided with coercive power and responsible for many human rights violations , and with high levels of impunity in this regard (Amnesty International, 2024; Casas et al., 2024; Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2022; Sáez-Fuentealba, 2025), imposed a vision and order contrary to millions of protesters across the country. Within the context of the social uprising of 18 October 2019, national and international organisations documented the magnitude of police violence against protesters, identifying over one thousand reported cases of torture, hundreds of cases of torture involving sexual violence, hundreds of ocular mutilations, and at least six deaths (Amnesty International, 2020; Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019). These acts were perpetrated by Chilean state agencies responsible for control, repression, and public order.

Moreover, these dynamics generate a range of psychosocial impacts on population. In this regard, evidence suggests that perceptions of procedural injustice and police treatment of protesters have been fundamental predictors of the perceived legitimacy of the Carabineros (police) institution (Gerber et al., 2023). Furthermore, police violence expressed through repression may radicalise social movements by generating anger that intensifies both normative and non-normative actions (Hatibovic et al., 2023). These Chilean studies thus make an important contribution to understanding some of the psychosocial ramifications of police violence, amongst other aspects. However, the limited evidence on online environments regarding these interactions highlights an opportunity for further research to explore phenomena associated with policing and violence in digital spaces,

online behaviour that may manifest through different forms of expression, resources, and resistance strategies in response to such issues.

In that context, the COVID-19 pandemic disaster emerged, with the most lasting measures regarding lockdowns and social distancing, a period from which social mobilisations either decreased drastically in intensity or ceased.

Even before the context of the social uprising, and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the socio-digital world was a place what was happening, as well as a resource of collective memory regarding the violence to which the people were being subjected by the police. This article explores part of these resources with focusing on discursive reactions to a satirical video about power within the social uprising context of marked inequality, in order to understand the construction of social identities on social media through discourse analysis of satire.

This is important because it addresses how polarisation processes are associated with social identity processes in social media, providing a perspective from qualitative studies and contributing to present dynamics that have occurred in Latin America. These contributions help enrich a body of literature that remains under-represented in the current academic scenario. The aim is to develop an understanding of how social identities are constructed on social media in a context of strong inequality.

Social identity and polarisation

Understanding these dynamics through Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), could contributes to the generation of knowledge about the complex implications of the threats that took place in that territory, considering the relevance of social identity and the ties to the place and behavioural consequences (Walker et al., 2015).

Regarding the contributions of classical social identity theory, its emergence is notable for addressing both theoretical and applied concerns, particularly questions about the minimal conditions necessary for intergroup discrimination to occur. These enquiries led to the formulation of the minimal group paradigm, which demonstrates that mere categorisation of individuals into arbitrary and artificial groups is sufficient to engender social competition through intergroup favouritism and bias (Tajfel et al., 1971).

In general terms, social identity theory is founded upon three components: categorisation, comparison, and social identity. The theory demonstrates that separating individuals into groups based on non-substantive criteria is sufficient to generate intergroup differentiation (Sánchez, 2014), which may have several repercussions and manifestations, thereby adding complexity to structural contradictions.

Research in this area has shown that members of groups with high or low levels of group identification respond differently to group norms according to their level of identification (Jetten et al., 1997ab), as well as according to the availability of anonymity (Spears et al., 1990). Further findings reveal interactional dynamics between leaders and groups based

on social identity, which can result in group behaviours that, in some cases, involve social changes, status quo or polarisation depending on the magnitude of these events and the responses adopted towards them (Jetten et al., 2021; Steffens et al., 2018).

Collectively, these aspects underscore the continued importance and relevance of social identity research, as well as opportunities for further theoretical enrichment and the integration of new perspectives.

Social identity is considered a central aspect of health and well-being (Haslam et al., 2009), being multifaceted, multidimensional and context-related, and influencing different dimensions of human behaviour, beliefs and emotions (Greenaway, 2015) among others. Given that social identities are socially constructed, some are chosen and others imposed, and they can change according to our socio-historical context. However, it is crucial to recognize that, because social identities are contextually embedded, structural oppression can also promote unequal social identities (Miller, 2023).In other words, the scales of oppression tip one way depending on which social identity is involved in the structure, but there is also the possibility of a response to this.

We are aware that these processes also take place in socio digital reality of social media. In recent years, the use of social media has grown explosively, and is widely used to complement social interactions or to express perspectives on relevant or trend topics, whether through agreement, disagreement, or controversy (Harrison, 2023; Humphreys, 2018; Margetts et al., 2015; Swann, 2020). In a heterogeneous society, the expression of such perspectives can contribute to understanding what lies beyond official discourse., however, with this increase of activity in social media, the surveillance and censorship have grown with clear political and economic purposes (Elers et al., 2021; Gehl, 2014; Véliz, 2021; Zuboff, 2020).

Over the past decade, research interest in polarisation has grown considerably, with numerous studies examining this phenomenon (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). Nevertheless, most research focuses on Western contexts using quantitative methods. Studies have shown that political polarisation can create high levels of conflict between ideologically opposed groups (Van Prooijen, 2021), particularly when one group seeks to impose its political beliefs and values on society through various strategies.

An example of political polarisation may involve the belief that wealth concentration among property owners constitutes the logical foundation of democracy. These groups could promote this perspective through propaganda, censorship, or devaluation of different perspectives, reinforcing its political identity, social representations, and institutions. They may perceive alternative approaches view as threats requiring opposition through censorship, exclusion, or violence against groups that fail to align with their demands. Polarised groups often fail to recognise their extremism, and they can consider and impose, for example, that neoliberal ideology as neutral, superior, and normal, whilst viewing non-aligned groups as opposition. This example illustrates underlying group processes, particularly those related to social identity formation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986),

where groups respond differently when perceiving threats to their historical continuity (Jetten & Hutchison, 2011; Jetten & Wohl, 2012).

We must also consider that political perceptions and inter-group dynamics become strained following serious events such as disasters. These situations can trigger authoritarian tendencies, nationalism, or anti-immigrant sentiment (Albrecht, 2017, 2022; Carlin et al., 2014; Fritsche et al., 2012; Panzeri et al., 2023; Roccato et al., 2021; Visconti, 2022). Such processes can significantly alter socio-spatial relationships, connections, and social identities within communities (Hopkins & Dixon, 2006).

In contemporary contexts of polarisation, digital environments and internet usage have expanded rapidly. Evidence shows that social identity processes are fundamental within digital spaces, as they contribute to group formation and promote identification with emerging groups (Akfırat et al., 2021).

Polarisation therefore extends into digital contexts. Research highlights social identity processes underlying polarised interactions on digital platforms, revealing hate speech, collective actions, and communication strategies that exploit fear or humour for political purposes (Iyengar et al., 2012; Macková & Macek, 2014; Macková et al., 2024; Nelson et al., 2025; Rohlfing & Sonnenberg, 2016).

Real-world events influence how digital communities interact. In connection with these events, it has been noted that discursive resources, such as the normalisation of violent discourse and actions, can become widespread practice in the digital world (Hiaeshutter-Rice & Hawkins, 2022). In turn, digital media's reach enables connections beyond local communities. This may mean that, in a polarised context, dominant groups may perceive that if digital media enable connections beyond local communities, this could destabilise the prevailing social order from their perspective, and they may use these media as spaces for shaping social identity in line with their own purposes (Törnberg, 2022).

In the present case, documented events reveal actions carried out by state police forces through which, is constructed regarding their role and legitimacy, which society can oppose, particularly when it comes to situations involving violence and abuse of power. Moreover, there are numerous situations of the indiscriminate use the force, and killings aimed at establishing hegemony and order, as occurred in the context of social uprising, marked with severe confrontation towards power. And one way of questioning the abuse of power has been through art, and one of its forms is satire, which can be interpreted and received in multiple ways.

Satire of power and social media

In historical terms, the madness for power represents (Foucault, 1976), has involved banishment, confinement as forms of censorship and instrumentalisation for the authority, but also those considered 'outliers' have also been able to denounce and mock power. In this sense, satire reveals a similar dynamyc, the relevance to give some tools for the elaboration of difficult aspects of socio-political reality (Merziger, 2012).

Indeed, it is important to attend to satire within a socio digital reality as in social media, because satire is an artistic expression with political components, which generates a series of social reactions, 'it is made visible in a kind of interactive event where a viewer/reader recognizes the satirical intent by picking up on the text's references to phenomena beyond itself' (Nilsson, 2015, p.167), being effective in the public sphere, considering the socio-historic context of its expression (Caron, 2021; Etty, 2019; Thompson et al., 2009).

Satire is particularly interesting because satire can be both, a comic discourse, but also a serious discourse, it is paradoxical, it combines both aspects at the same time (Caron, 2021), may be for that reason that in power feel uncomfortable with satire, recalling that it is presented in a variety of different formats (Duncan-O'Neill, 2024; Griffin, 2014), and historically, for centuries, it has played a role in relation to power, being a form of freedom of expression in the face of domination, which demonstrates part of its political components (McQuiston, 2019).

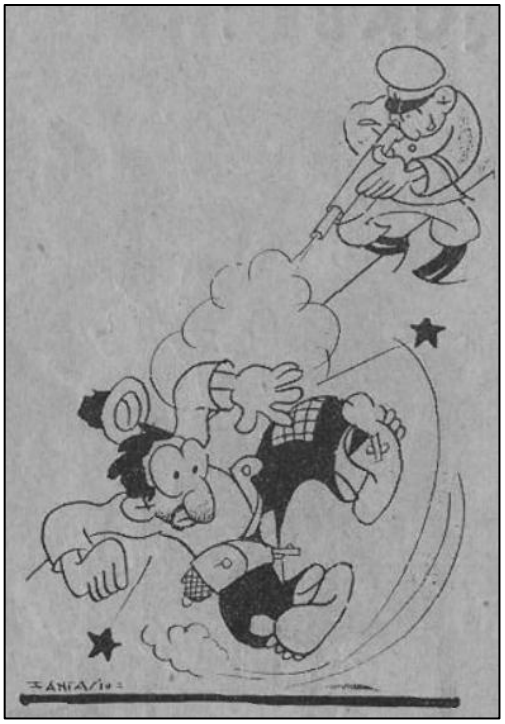
Therefore, satire as a tool, 'provide a voice to the subaltern while subverting power relations, exploitation and repression' (Hammett, 2010, p.15), and can it be problematic, sometimes uncertain about the political effect, and rather than final answers, it tends to provoke questions (Griffin, 2014), in this sense, 'The point of satire is not to banish deformity but to call it by its right name and only in that sense to rob it of its power over us' (Griffin, 2014, p.183).

In Chile, the satire of power has been present for nearly a century. For example, satire directed at the police (in Chile *carabineros* or *pacos*) has emerged from their constitution and doing a criticism to dictatorship or their violence, being Topaze Magazine (Délano-Frederick, 1931) (Figure 1) reference. However, after years of national circulation, the magazine was forced to close under another dictatorship.however, its memories and contemporaneity are maintained, which can be reflected in the following:

> (…) according to the dictator Ibáñez, we were living in a land of bandits.
>
> Of course, this was more or less true while the military regime was in force, but we did not suspect that this was so (…)
>
> The bad thing is that, after banditry was exterminated, the militarist machine did not disarm, but continued to act against citizens who did not think in the same way as Ibáñez (…).
>
> But since, according to the statistics, the percentage of banditry has dropped a great deal, it would be desirable that the new government, once the danger for which the carabineros were created has disappeared, according to the declaration of the person who formed them, should proceed to disband them. (Délano-Frederick, 1931, p.5).

Figure 1

To Exterminate Banditry



Note. Topaze Magazine, 1931.

As can be observed, satire can provoke responses from both those in positions of power and from segments of society, and for this reason, we analyse the discourses around satire, as discursive practices that respond to an inter-group conflict, which accounts for the social identities that are conveyed in social media.

Social media can function as a digital space, for multiple ideas for the transformation of power relationship, where politics are not rare or 'expert' affair, change the institutional relations, empowering bottom-up relational dynamics, but at the same time, demonstrate our structural economic, cultural and political contradictions in the hegemonic model, it is this very model that deepens the foundations of violence and societal conflicts, and it is not the social media that is the source of contradictions, but may reflect the violence of the model itself (Flisfeder, 2021; Margetts et al., 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Design

The present qualitative research (Valles, 1999) is located within the field of discourse analysis (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Íñiguez & Antaki, 1998; Parker, 2015) and adopts a critical approach. This type of study seeks to explore the phenomenon to analyse its social, political, and material implications, and in this case to understand the construction of social identities in social media through discourse analysis around the satire of power.

Materials

Considering that the focus of this study is the discourses on satire of power, the corpus (Parodi, 2008) is composed of discourses material related to two Chilean satirical videos publish on a social media platform, between 2019 and 2024. The videos have accumulated more than 1,200,000 views, and 1,303 comments posted by users of the platform were identified and analysed. All the discourses were digitised, organised, and processed.

Specifically, each video was published on a recognised digital video platform and shared publicly by content creators. The videos are approximately three minutes long. This report intentionally omits the names of platform members who posted comments. Both satirical videos are audiovisual productions that present provocative interpretations of police and political violence experienced in Chile. They show police actions whilst modifying or adding discursive content, creating contradiction with the displayed actions through creativity, humour, irony, and altered meanings. This approach denounces abuses committed by state agents representing power. However, this research focuses on public responses expressed by digital community members regarding these videos.

These satirical parody videos were published at two distinct temporal junctures: the first prior to the social uprising, and the second during it. The videos primarily depict police officers assaulting, detaining, and interacting with civilians, with the central argument focusing on hypothetical efforts by the police to transform negative public perceptions whilst constructing a visual and semantic narrative through a series of brief scenes that illustrate their alliance with political-economic power and instances of police abuse, thereby configuring impunity and injustice. In each video, the voices and content of interactions were altered, although the police procedures and actions depicted were reportedly unaltered. The science fiction film scenes were incorporated to reinforce the visual argument being problematised were also modified in their dialogues.

In the first video, the police are characterised through actions of excessive force against civilians during actual police procedures, whilst the second video primarily features scenes from science fiction films which contribute to caricaturing the police as unreliable, abusive, and violent quasi-heroes, and protesters as challengers of the established order. Both police and protesters are situated within a context of chaos and social confrontation. Notably, the dialogues in the satirical videos, delivered by characters associated with the police, protesters, and the narrator, are laden with symbolism, rhetorical devices, and allusions to sociopolitical events that occurred in the country, evidencing injustices perpetrated by the police.

Analytical Strategy

This process involved a sequence of analytical stages inspired by discourse analysis from a critical perspective (Jäger, 2003; Rojas-Lizana, 2020, 2022, 2024, 2025; Willig, 2021). These steps included the identification of the ways in which the object is discursively constructed, to subsequently delve into a review of the discursive context in which these constructions

have been legitimised in that specific way, paying attention to the implications of such discourse and how it orients action.

Specifically, the data were subjected to multiple iterative readings. Subsequently, different discourses fragments were selected from participants' contributions that connoted some actions, situations, objects or ties linked to the social identities that the videos made it possible to associate. Next, the discourses were organised and grouped according to similarity to each other, for the identification of central discursive axes. The most representative discourses, that account for power relations associated with the specific social identities. These axes were defined inductively, in order to help in the grouping and differentiation of the discourses. All discourses were originally in Spanish and selected representative excerpts were subsequently translated into English for publication purposes.

Therefore, the analytical process began with an exploratory reading phase of the entire corpus to gain familiarity with the data and identify preliminary patterns. Subsequently, initial coding was undertaken, wherein different fragments were selected from participants' comments on the platform that connoted actions, situations, objects, or ties linked to the social identities that rendered visible by the videos.

Following this, the construction of analytical dimensions phase involved organising and grouping discourses according to their thematic similarity, thereby identifying the core dimensions underpinning their respective discourses. Through an iterative process of refinement of analytical dimensions, the most representative discourses were identified, those which account for power relations associated with the respective social identities. These dimensions were defined inductively to facilitate the grouping and differentiation of discourses whilst maintaining analytical rigour. This iterative refinement ensured that the emergent dimensions were grounded in the data and adequately captured the complexity of identity construction and power dynamics within the corpus.

To enrich the process and analytical exercise, the above involved annotations and interpretations (Saldaña, 2016), also recognising the implications of the discursive (Íñiguez & Antaki, 1998).

Notwithstanding the nature and characteristics of this documentary-based study, which analyses a public textual corpus in a digital medium and did not require Ethics Committee approval, all possible measures were taken to safeguard the anonymity of publicly posted comments by changing usernames and excluding images that could identify potential users or the group responsible for the videos.

RESULTS

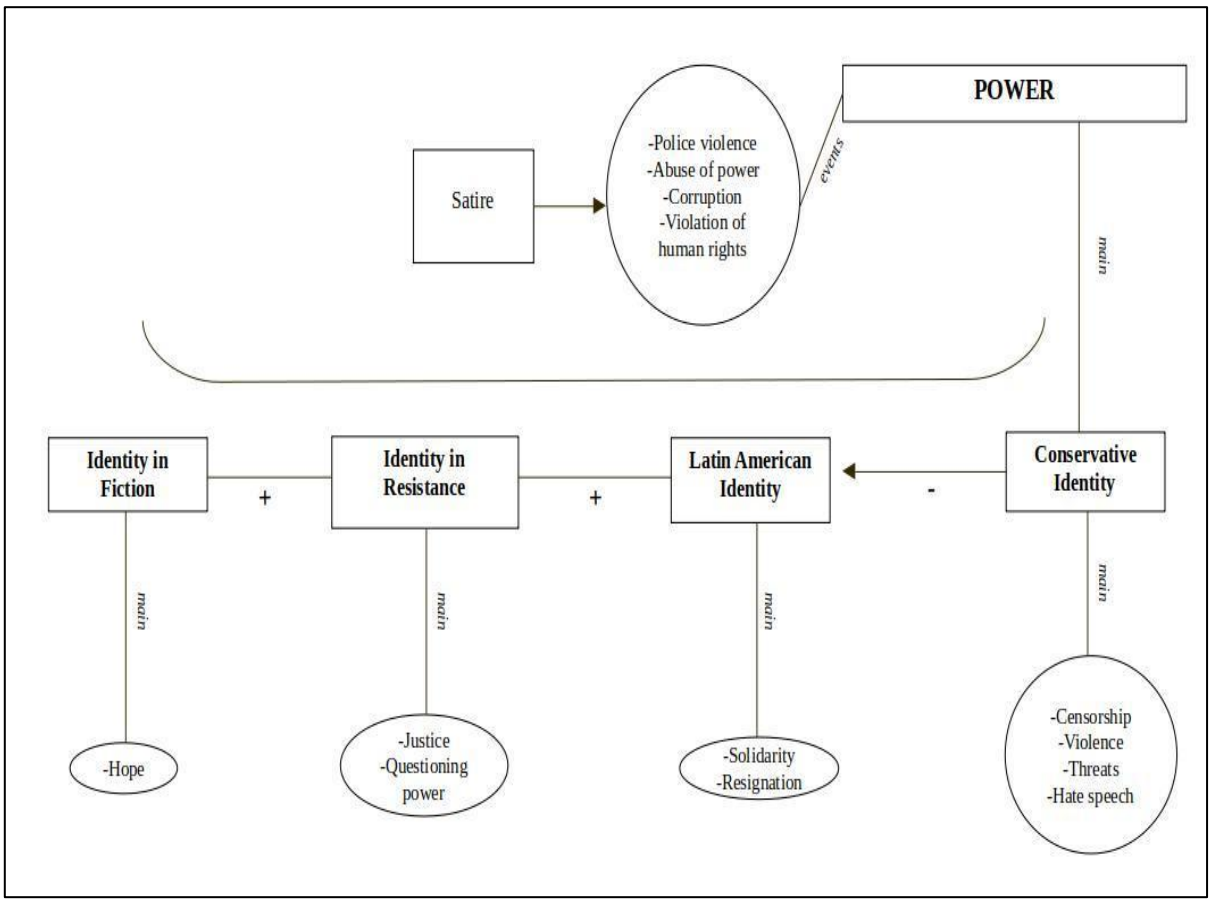
We present the results of the public discourses surrounding two Chilean satirical videos on a media platform, between 2019 and 2024, considering our focus on developing an understanding of the construction of social identities in social media through a discourse analysis of the satire of power. We emphasise that most of the reactions to the satires

consisted on expressions of laughter, jokes, approval and excerpts from the videos. We have further deepened the analysis with other representative elements of these public discourses. The main dimensions (Figure 2) of the discursive social identities comprises four main analytical dimensions: (1) *identity in resistance*, (2) *conservative identity*, (3) *identity in fiction*, and (4) *Latin American identities*, according to the main analytical dimensions identified in its composition as a discourse.

Particularly, in this section we present a detailed description of the analytical dimensions identified, and in each of them the reader will also find, by way of exemplification, groups of quotations extracted from the narratives produced by different members of this digital space.

Figure 2

Discursive social identities around the satire of power



Note. Own elaboration.

Identity in resistance

This analytical dimension, which is the most prevalent within the community narratives, is made up of codes that declare affective components associated with anger and even discontent with the figure of power, in this case the police, for their actions and what they

represent in general, and particularly for the intensification of violent actions directed towards Chilean society in the framework of the social uprising that began on October 18th, 2019. Such discourses predominantly demand justice and challenge power, and therefore constitute discursive practices that construct an identity in resistance to police violence:

'And they look like robots by not reasoning' (@Juan, 2019)

'And in reality they are even more pathetic... XD' (@Fran, 2019)

'Make people love them? That thing is harder than returning the money they stole.....' (@Isa, 2019)

'They will be the most hated institution in history !!!!' (@Roberto, 2019)

'cop assholes, the shame of Chile and now the laugh of Chile' (@Lun, 2019)

'They are murderers and rapists' (@María, 2019)

'cops...cruel, thieving, ruthless...and cokeheaded... briber' (@Jose, 2019)

'👍..... what psychopath puts caustic soda water to burn protesters?' (@Ale, 2019)

'poor fachos get annoyed when watching this video of reality jokes' (@Cami, 2019)

'(...) everyone already knows that the guanaco (police water cannon) has caustic soda 😳' (@Gonza, 2019)

'Excellent !!!

Thank you for reporting with humour the harsh reality of the political mafias' (@Ami, 2019)

'Today folks at 5pm go to the rally in Dignity Square (ex Italy Square)' (@Karol, 2019)

Participant replicates rap of the video used in the satire:

'You have the power but abuse it (Hit 1)

And the cops (male) have boobs (Hit 2)

But you shit on honest salesmen (Hit 3)

I don't believe you! state parasite (Knockout)'

(@Carl, 2019)

These public discourses that take place in the digital framework are closely related to cultural codes in the use of language, appeal to collective memory, which together form part of an emerging identity in resistance that makes itself felt in the face of power and its abuse. At the same time, on the other hand, beyond the 'us' composed of affectivity, experiences, cultural codes and memories, there are allusions to the 'other' in these inter-group relations, which along with being the police and who has traditionally represented that sector at the local level.

Conservative identity

This analytical dimension, although representing a minority position, reveals us a highly relevant phenomenon associated with polarisation practices in which questioning power becomes taboo, even when it commits violent actions, including human rights violations, thus, censorship, and the vindication of police violence, operates as a group mechanism to conserve an order that they assess as superior:

> 'What a stupidity to mock authority' (@Zuri, 2020)
>
> 'Pinochet is the only solution, and stop insulting, cowards. Ah, call the police to defend you' (@Nikki, 2023)
>
> 'you resist the police...Stop instilling hatred for the police, you resentful people' (@Ale, 2022)
>
> '(...) Now almost everything is about communist ideologies. I guess you're interested in that audience' (@Rene, 2021)
>
> 'The criminals are obviously not going to like the police, but honest, hard-working people support them 100%.
>
> I don't care about those who lost their eyesight' (@Sami, 2020)
>
> 'now it is unwise to laugh at the police, why don't you laugh at homosexuals?, are you afraid?' (@Alem, 2020)
>
> 'What a contrariness !!!😵 4 years later, EVERYONE IS ASKING THE COPS and even the MILITARY to take to the streets to stop organised crime and the national and imported 'taxpayers' from Chavezuela, Narcolombia, Perukistan' (@Denis, 2023)
>
> 'Cut the shit! You've become boring. If you are so cool, show your face. The police is loved and respected' (@Jessi, 2023)

This is characterised by condensed narratives composed of codes...that justify respect for the authority or figure of power represented by the police, including the legitimisation of its violence , based on their status as authority and preserving its identity and implications. From this justificatory position, those who do not align with authority are framed as delinquents, communists, progressives, hooded individuals, or resentful subjects. These public discourses that take place in the digital framework are closely related to cultural codes in the use of language of inferiorisation of those who question power for the violence exercised, making direct allusion to the justification of violence directed at people with ocular trauma and blindness as a result of gunshots, as well as efforts to censor artistic expression. In this sense, the use of this presumable group is made up of the morality of authority and respect for the established right-wing order, with one of its main protagonists being the dictator Augusto Pinochet, whose presence was longed for, and even mentioning him to impose order.

These discourses that openly express the need for the application of censorship, threats of violence, hatred, articulating a strongly polarised discourse, that makes no reference to

the events and actions that are being questioned, or if they do, they support the actions of violence and violation of human rights.

Identity in fiction

This dimension is composed of comments that declare components located primarily in a hypothetical or fictitious scenario in which the power represented by the police would assume the role or behaviour that the satire seeks to problematise. In this imagined reality, police conduct shifts from violent behaviour directed towards Chilean society to a supportive role characterised by integrity and honesty, which would ostensibly benefit society according to some community members.

It is fundamentally underpinned by irony and hope, two seemingly contradictory yet coexisting affective registers that operate as coping mechanisms within the community's discourse. The ironic tone acknowledges the stark divergence between current reality and the desired fiction, whilst the expression of hope maintains the possibility, however remote, of transformation. This dual orientation is evident in the following representative discourses:

> 'If the cops were really like that, how nice it would be' (@Francis, 2022)
>
> 'The only series where they are admired' (@Nevan, 2019)
>
> 'haha..., they would have to change their attitude to be loved' (@Kin, 2020)

These discourses are primarily predicated on the aspiration that the behaviour of power representatives could be fundamentally different. Necessarily, this dimension reveals incipient traces of irony and hope regarding a potential police repositioning towards non-violence. Should such a fictitious scenario materialise, it would substantially diminish intergroup conflict by reducing the perceived threat to social identity. This orientation represents a counterfactual engagement with identity, one that imagines reconciliation through institutional transformation rather than confrontation or conservation of the status quo.

In this respect, identity in fiction differs markedly from both identity in resistance and conservative identity. Whilst the former mobilises collective action through opposition and the latter seeks to preserve existing power structures, identity in fiction occupies a liminal space that simultaneously critiques the present and projects an alternative future. By sustaining a fictional scenario that would attenuate threats to social identity, participants engage in a form of imaginative resistance that neither fully endorses nor entirely rejects the possibility of change. However, it bears noting that this dimension was the least represented in the analysis, suggesting that such hopeful counterfactuals remain marginal within the broader discourse landscape.

Latin American identities

The narratives within this dimension are composed of codes that declare components that

refer to national identities made explicit in the digital community through the art pieces in question, and that interpret them and some of them express solidarity with the massive and systematic experience in Chile of suffering violence from the powers that be:

> '2022 and we are still haha 😂CL' (@Lucian, 2022)
>
> 'I am from Peru, I live in Santiago. You made my day 🤣' (@Mel, 2020)
>
> 'greetings from Uruguay (...) there are times when I didn't understand anything haha' (@Nicky, 2019)
>
> 'Everything that is happening...exactly.... I shared it on Facebook.... poor Chileans are being treated like assholes' (@Uri, 2020)
>
> 'Greetings from Mexico, where it is easier to find corpses in squares than a fucking video to smile' (@Mel, 2019)

According to some participants, it is also possible to identify the characterisation of the contextual difference through the use of language particularly in relation to the way Chileans speak and the challenges that this implied at the moment of immediately understanding the message, in people who are part of the same Spanish-speaking community. Other accounts allude to the maintenance of the inequalities present in the country, which is not exclusive to the Latin American country. In general terms, these discourses express solidarity as well as resignation for a reality that has become normalised.

Finally, we highlight that on a general level, both the identities in resistance, in fiction and Latin American identities, are on a discursive plane that connotes positively or in tune with the questioning expressed in the satire videos. However, the extreme position of the conservative identity, which demands violence and a military dictatorship, presents a discursive plane of negative connotation, directed both at the creators of the videos and at the other identities mentioned above.

DISCUSSION

Public discourse surrounding power-related satire on social media is shaping distinct social identities. Through their commentary on various political challenges encountered in everyday life—such as crisis management, failed solutions, and accountability—digital community participants demonstrate sustained political engagement, defining the way in which social ties develop or disarticulate in a specific place, based on events and behaviours that are problematised (Walker et al., 2015). This provides more equitable access to understanding perceptions of social conflicts, even whilst political elites may disregard these perspectives. Nevertheless, there exists a faction that supports authoritarian responses, including the suppression or intimidation of those who question authority. It is crucial to recognise that social media merely reflects systemic contradictions rather than causing them (Flisfeder, 2021; Margetts et al., 2015); the underlying issues stem from authoritarian logic and inequality within our hegemonic social

model. Censorship fails to address these structural problems, as it does nothing to challenge the validation of authoritarian violence and inequality that certain groups advocate. Thus, inequality must be confronted with equality, not through situational hierarchical violence, in other words, to promote the process of liberation, in order to transform the conditions of inequality and oppression (Montero & Sonn, 2009).

Two primary identity positions emerge from the public discourse. Firstly, there is a identity in resistance that opposes authoritarian violence and power abuse, responding through defensive discourse, in this sense it could be assumed that the aim of satire, in terms of subverting power relations, is fulfilled, as well as identifying the abuse of power (Griffin, 2014; Hammett, 2010).

Secondly, a conservative identity characterised by censorship and rejection of authority-questioning voices exists, often justifying violence against supposed criminal protesters. This may eventually be related to what scholars indicate that the rise of social networks, the strategies of those who hold power, are also present through these channels (Elers et al., 2021; Gehl, 2014; Véliz, 2021; Zuboff, 2020). This may also be associated with increased support for authoritarianism, nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment and right-wing ideology in the wake of disasters as identified in previous studies (Albrecht, 2017, 2022; Carlin et al., 2014; Fritsche et al., 2012; Panzeri et al., 2023; Roccato et al., 2021; Visconti, 2022).

The fictional dimension identity reveals how the ingroup interprets certain efforts and contradictions of the outgroup to transform perceptions and legitimacy of actors who have engaged in violence towards civil society. If such a transformation were to materialise, it could diminish perceived threats to the ingroup's social identity. . The use of irony, present both in the satirical characters' dialogues and in community comments responding to them, exposes the contradictions inherent in police-civilian interactions. Simultaneously, however, traces of hope emerge within some comments, expressing aspirations for substantive behavioural change amongst the group that has exercised violence, or at minimum, that such violence has not been directed towards them.

This duality of irony that acknowledges violence, and hope, may be indicative of a cycle of police violence towards the civilian population, a pattern whereby the fictional reimagining of non-violent policing represents both a critique of current practices and a coping mechanism for communities subjected to sustained institutional violence. The coexistence of cynical acknowledgement (through irony) and aspirational thinking (through hope) suggests a complex psychological negotiation between accepting present reality and maintaining the possibility of future change. These dynamic warrants deeper exploration in future research, particularly regarding how such counterfactual narratives function within contexts of ongoing state violence and how they may influence collective action orientations, intergroup relations, and the perceived legitimacy of institutions over time.

Thirdly, the above represents an intergroup conflict rooted in divergent social identities and varying attitudes towards violence in maintaining the status quo and legitimacy of

identities, a pattern consistent with previous research on group conflict in society (Hammack, 2006; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Research also reveals a group that believes in the possibility of reforming authoritarian practices from within. Despite these differences, most identities in this digital sphere share a common Latino symbolic framework for constructing knowledge about events, using humour that echoes a social identity that experiences the threat posed by the violence of authority as a component in the face of undermined well-being, reminding us that social identity is a central component of health and well-being (Haslam et al., 2009).

Fourth, satirical art as political artefacts do not solve political issues directly but creates a space representing the presumed sentiments of most participants. In general, this digital community demonstrate sense of humour as part of their well-being being a possible adaptative strategy for some happiness to appear, and that its similar to other findings (Diener, 1984; Ford et al., 2016; Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023), and whilst maintaining interest in public affairs, whether supporting change or maintaining the system's status quo. This also creates a digital memory of pivotal issues whilst highlighting institutional patterns that have oppressed populations, as also evidenced by historical Chilean satire (Délano-Frederick, 1931). Satire thus serves as a tool for systemic reflection and power critique (Merziger, 2012), providing a platform for sharing perspectives on social media. This may prove problematic for authorities or those seeking social homogeneity, potentially leading to intervention or censorship of spaces that facilitate common identity perception, particularly in Latin America, through their considerable resources and influence in concentrated technology and media corporations.

Fifth, it is crucial to consider this sociodigital reality's potential influence on social and political life as societies become increasingly digitised. Traditional governance boundaries are shifting towards digitalisation and new surveillance technologies (Véliz, 2021; Zuboff, 2020). The dangerous is not to consider that under conditions of severe inequality and economic crisis as in Chile, affective and opinion polarisation (Dunaway & Settle, 2022; Iyengar, 2022) could be adding to this. The power structure's discomfort may stem not necessarily from inequality or violence validation, but from recognising the potential of collective social identity development in response to unmet needs and increasing contradictions, or from sectors capitalising on community discontent to seize power—ultimately representing a power struggle rather than systemic change. In this sense, it cannot be ruled out that the change in perception of the police may change without them changing their behaviour, as was the hope of some, but rather from the increase in the perception of insecurity associated with crime, which is not necessarily related to the crime rate, although the message in this regard can have great depth and effectiveness depending on how the social media are handled.

Sixth, the results align with literature suggesting associations between social media and social identity (Akfırat et al., 2021; Macková & Macek, 2014; Rohlfing & Sonnenberg, 2016) with various implications. Notably, polarisation may intensify through social identity formation spaces (Törnberg, 2022). In digitalised societies, this can have broad implications

depending on the political interests of polarised governing groups or those aspiring to power, significantly impacting society. In extreme cases, this may relativise fundamental convictions about social coexistence and human rights guarantees and respect, as identified in this study. These findings may be related to the projection of a continued increase in democratic rollback at the global level and less freedom (Orhan, 2022).

These findings cannot be considered representative of the general population, only of those who chose to engage publicly with satire in digital spaces, generating controversy and heterogeneity. This indicates digital community diversity whilst highlighting the opposition between those rejecting violence through defensive discursive resistance and a minority advocating authoritarian violence to maintain order in a profoundly unequal society. It becomes necessary to explore the viability of solidarity, freedom, and equality as priorities in the current systemic crisis, or question whether we are moving away from these values through their instrumentalisation by both left and right-wing actors who, through their practices, reinforce the model's contradictions.

The political elements of satire function (Caron, 2021; Griffin, 2014; Hammett, 2010; McQuiston, 2019; Merziger, 2012) as powerful catalysts for social media community responses, demonstrating significant potential for naturalistic research. When satirical content circulates in socio digital spaces, it generates organic interactions and authentic discourse that researchers can observe in their natural context, free from laboratory constraints or artificial settings. This methodological advantage allows scholars to examine how different social groups naturally respond to political critique, how they process complex social issues through humour, and how they construct collective meanings around power dynamics. However, not all people have access to the internet, or if they are users of the digital platform and reviewed the videos, they decided not to comment on them.

Beyond the above, we also consider that these digital interactions leave detailed traces of public sentiment, political positioning, and social identity formation that might otherwise remain hidden or difficult to access through traditional research methods. The spontaneous nature of these responses, coupled with the relative anonymity of social media, often results in more candid expressions of political views and social grievances than those obtained through formal interviews or surveys.

This rich, unfiltered data source provides valuable insights into contemporary social movements, political resistance, and power relationships, whilst also offering a window into how digital communities process and respond to sociopolitical tensions in a context of inequality. Such naturalistic observations can inform our understanding of how social media platforms serve as spaces for political discourse, identity formation, and collective action in increasingly digitalised societies at a particular point in time, but without neglecting the use that power can make of the same digital space.

In this study, different considerations on discourses in social media were observed that contribute to the understanding of the construction of social identities in a context of strong

inequality, and dynamics linked to processes of polarisation in groups that vindicate violence and authoritarian regimes can be observed.

On the one hand, the production of discourses on the occasion of satire allows us to identify discourses that question the abuse of violence and resist it, an identity in resistance, and on the other hand, a polarised sector, a conservative identity, which demands censorship if it questions power or the acts of violence committed by state agents, which in turn presents anti-immigration, homophobia and anti-communism narratives.

On the other hand, it was also possible to recognise discursive identities oriented towards hope for a change of attitude on the part of the police, or resignation and solidarity with groups experiencing inequality and who suffered violence.

Finally, this qualitative research aims to contribute to this complex area of study, by generating knowledge from contexts that remain under-represented in the scientific literature.

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