

Viral Voices. Digital storytelling, women and HIV in *Podcast Positivos: Mujeres VIHvas* project

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Purpose

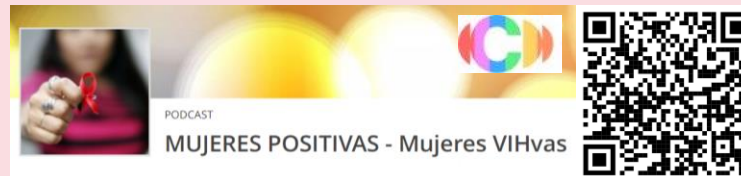
Four decades after the first diagnoses women maintain a secondary role in HIV infection and continue to be neglected in HIV policies and strategies. At the same time, society perpetuates stigma and discrimination.

There is a need to constantly explore new tools to address this phenomenon. The aim is to explore the potential of digital storytelling as a tool to challenge the hegemonic *herstory* around HIV-positive women by analysing the project *Podcast Positivos: Mujeres VIHvas*.

Methods

Interpretative study through virtual ethnography, conducted in 2020, analysing the narrative of 8 podcast episodes published openly in Spain in 2019 by CESIDA (State Coordinator for HIV and AIDS) and performed by HIV-positive women. Semantic axes, metaphors, forbidden words and explicit and implicit discourse acts were identified and grouped into different categories of study.

In relation to feminist theories of intersectionality, performativity and cyborg, the use of language, voice and the role of listening were discussed.



Silence: "You had to live it in silence because it was, it is a disease that you were pointed out"
Disclosure: "To break those silences is to be able to say it personally"

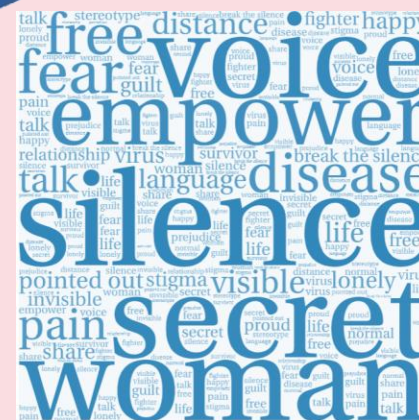
External stigma: "Who knows what you've done"
Violence: "It seems that if I'm a woman I cannot be wrong"
Internal stigma: "I am the one who wants to be visible, but is afraid"

I am a virus: "It is stuck [the virus] to me"
My voice is hacking a virus: "I am a person who, despite the prejudices or stigmas of society, is determined to be a voice"

Q: "Do you think this experience has made you stronger?"

A: "If I already had experience with resilience on other issues and in relation to HIV diagnosis, I feel that I am now a stronger person and that this experience has empowered me".

Episode 4.



This work is based in part on the MSc Thesis in Gender Studies at Linköping University (2020) available at: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1518400&dswid=-8850>

Results

Categories identified:

- HIV as a partial secret, in tension between public knowledge and acceptance according to place, time or life experience.
- Intersections that enable the categorisation of external stigma (social discrimination and violence) and internal stigma (fear and lack of power).
- Embodiment of the virus and the potential for transformation through the protagonists' voice on a digital platform.

Conclusion

Researching the voices and experiences of HIV-positive women allows to get at the constructed categories, the symbolic burdens imposed on the body, the main stigmas surrounding HIV and the use of storytelling as a therapeutic and visibilisation strategy.

Empowering people living with HIV to improve their emotional well-being has become an important public health priority and e-Health tools such as digital storytelling and podcasting could become an accessible approach option.