

# Framing of the Chilean media memory: the news about the death of Fidel Castro

## Encuadre de la memoria mediática chilena: las noticias sobre la muerte de Fidel Castro

### Enquadramento da memória da mídia chilena: as notícias sobre a morte de Fidel Castro

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#### ABSTRACT

Fidel Castro was one of the most influential and controversial foreign characters of the last decade in Chile. From the news generated by his death in November 2016, we studied the memory built around his figure in the mass media of that country. Bearing in mind that the relationship between memory and the media is not innocuous, this paper argues that the press and television newscasts, with their own ideological agendas and their inherent characteristics, remembered the leader of the Cuban revolution based on carefully selected frames: funeral rite, contextualizing and debate memory.

**Keywords:** Fidel Castro; memory; written press; television news.

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#### RESUMEN

*Fidel Castro fue uno de los personajes extranjeros más controversiales de las últimas décadas en Chile. A partir de las noticias que generó su muerte en noviembre de 2016, se estudió la memoria construida en torno a su figura por los medios de comunicación de ese país. Considerando que la relación entre memoria y medios no es inocua, se propone que la prensa escrita y los noticieros de televisión, con sus propias agendas ideológicas y las características de sus soportes, recordaron al líder de la revolución cubana a partir de determinados encuadres mediatizados: rito fúnebre, contextualización y memoria en debate.*

**Palabras clave:** Fidel Castro; memoria; prensa escrita; noticieros de televisión.

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#### RESUMO

Fidel Castro foi um dos personagens estrangeiros mais controversos das últimas décadas no Chile. Das notícias que geraram sua morte em novembro de 2016, estudou-se a memória que construída em torno de sua figura pela mídia deste país. Tendo em mente que a relação entre memória e mídia não é inócua, propôs-se que os programas de notícias de imprensa e televisão, com suas próprias agendas ideológicas e características de seus meios de comunicação, lembrassem o líder da revolução cubana a partir de certos ângulos midiáticos: ritual funerário, contextualização e memória em debate.

**Palavras-chave:** Fidel Castro; memória; imprensa escrita; notícias televisivas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although he was not a Chilean political figure, the death of the leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, on November 25, 2016, was a moment to revise and construct the collective memory around his figure, considering that not only he was a controversial actor in Chile's recent past, but he was also important for the current political cleavage. A demonstration of this was that, during the minute of silence held in the Chamber of Deputies in his honor, most of the parliamentarians of the right and Christian Democrats left the room (El Mostrador, November 28, 2016).

From the news generated by his death, we studied the memory built around his figure by the Chilean press and television news. Regarding people like Castro, who still remain more in the realm of collective memory than in that of history, the media has an important role in creating frameworks for citizen debate. Thus, we propose that the media, with their own ideological agendas and characteristics, reminded the leader of the Cuban revolution from frames that mediated his death and funeral rite, contextualized his figure and built a memory that is still in debate.

This research is framed within the studies made in Chile in the last years on media memory and recent political past. Since 2013, the year in which four decades of the breakdown of democracy were commemorated, numerous researches have addressed this issue. For example, there has been research on the television productions that revisited the situation of society in the seventies and eighties (Antezana, 2015; Schlotterbeck, 2015), as well as on the mediatic memory about the violations to Human Rights occurred in those years (Sorensen, 2015), the media sensationalism of memory when dealing with the coup d'état (Piper, 2013), the images of the day of the bombing of La Moneda, on September 11, 1973, and its use by the media (Campos, 2015), among others.

The mediatization of the collective memory, with its new logics, symbolisms and interpretations, makes its investigation of great importance. This is why the study of cases, such as the one proposed, allow us to better understand this phenomenon, so important for societies and their memories.

## THE COLLECTIVITY, DYNAMISM AND FRAGILITY OF MEMORY

Human memory is a social act. Halbwachs (1950) was one of the first to raise and develop the conceptualization of a collective memory to explain that

memories—although they are individual elaborations—exist to the extent of their relationship with the environment and with others. As Garde-Hansen (2011) points out, memory is constructed through a series of personal and group pasts that interact constantly. From this perspective, memory would not be something immobile; on the contrary, one of its main characteristics is its dynamism, caused by its constant interaction with the environment, which also means that it is never completely built. Thus, while the present beliefs guide the understanding of the past, the frames and schemes learned in remote times also help to shape the understanding of the present (Schudson, 1997).

These particularities of memory are what differentiate it from History, an academic discipline that collects and interprets the past. "Memory is life, always embodied by living groups (...) History is the always problematic construction of what is no longer" (Nora, 1984 p. 20).

Why do societies need memory? If we use the concept of Anderson (1993) that societies are imaginary communities, composed of numerous members who do not know each other, but who are united with the whole by symbolic ties, collective memory would become one of these elements of unity. As Eyerman, Madigan and Ring (2017) point out, collectivities need to "make use and meaningful sense of the past" (p. 14). Sturken (1997) explains that social groups commemorate their past with different purposes, but mainly to define and trace their own limits, what they are and what they are not. This is how social groups can remember and commemorate their past in order to give a moral example or justify failures, among others.

However, collective memory is never one. Within the social group there are different memories that interact. For example, the different generations will have different evaluations of the past according to whether they lived what is remembered or if they only access it through the story of third parties, monuments or others (Muller & Bermejo, 2016; Stone, van der Haegen, Luminet, & Hirst, 2014).

If the collective memory is mobile, it is never completely finished and has different versions within the same group, it is adequate not only to consider it as fragile and permeable to change, but also manageable. From a *Foucaultian* interpretation, it is possible to establish the collective memory as part of those secret mechanisms by which the knowledge that perpetuates power relations is transmitted (Foucault, 1979, 1992). As Ricoeur (2008) explains, in those societies where

there is an abuse of memory, this can be a prey to its past and its traumas, while in others where there is not enough memory, abuses of forgetfulness appear, and crimes or events that should not happen again are easily forgiven. Piñuel, Gaitán and Lozano (2013) point out that no memory is fully constructed or finished, and all truth about the past is historically provisional, capable of being retouched, augmented and cleaned of what is inconvenient.

#### MEMORY AND MEDIA FRAMING

The collective memory was revolutionized like never before in its history with the new resources offered by the media (Olick & Robbins, 1998), not only regarding the possibility of massifying the common memory, but also because the memory is mediated following new codes and forms of expression (Zelizer, 2011; Sumiala, 2012).

However, this relationship between memory and media is not obvious, especially considering the work of journalists, in which the past has always been something alien to their labor. The very thing of this profession is the new, the present, the scoops, so that everything that refers to the memory does not seem to belong to it. Thus, authors such as Halbwachs (1950) and Nora (1984), in their classics on collective memory, practically did not include the work of the media as builders of the past.

Nevertheless, nowadays, “undoubtedly, the mass media are one of the most powerful and important institutions in the process of memory formation” (Ángel, 2016, p. 302). As Cruz (2002) points out, the media have become true organs of historicization of society. In mass culture, as explained by Eyerhan, Madigan and Ring (2017), the media give a common framework regarding the memory that links individuals and, at the same time—as Yeste (2009) points out—they give the new generations the possibility to understand the past of their own community.

From this perspective, the media should not only be understood as a support for the memory of current societies, but also as a transformation of the same constructions of the past, now influenced by the media. Thompson (1998) points out that memory exists not only in the oral tradition, museums or monuments, but now works in conjunction with the symbolic contents of the past offered by the media. These facilitate the “reassembly of the practice and materials of individual and collective remembrance and reconstruction” (Hajek, Lohmeier, & Pentzold, 2016, p. 5).

Among the reasons why journalists resort to memory is not only the need to use remembrances of the past to contextualize their present stories (Zelizer, 2008), but also the interest generated by controversies over previous times, about which the society does not have a common view, but whose importance is not in doubt (Edy, 1999).

However, this relationship between the media and the memory is not innocuous. As Erll and Rigney (2009) point out, the media are more than mere passive and transparent transports of a past. According to Kitch (2002), the media mold memory by influencing the way in which their audiences will remember the past. In this regard, given that society does not expect the media to be in charge of constructing the official history, there is a kind of cultural license, as Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg (2011) call it, which allows them to freely select past events for the understanding of the present. Thus, this selection made by the media leads to the idea that media memory is determined by aspects such as the social role, ownership, technology or the limitations of the journalistic profession (Tweel, 2016).

To say that media, from their own mediated discourses, build memories for collective memory implies recognizing that they select and omit certain aspects of the past. Thus, the link between media memory and the framing theory becomes evident (Humanes, 2003).

In broad terms, framing implies that the media not only put issues on the public opinion agenda, but also provide a context based on the selection of certain aspects of reality, in such a way as to promote both a definition of the problem and an interpretation and solution (Entman, 1993).

Although there is a debate about whether the framing corresponds only to a second level of the agenda setting with specific attributes (McCombs, 2006; McCombs & Shaw, 1972) or if it is a new paradigm that does not focus on what topics the cover, but how they present them (Iyengar & Simon, 1991; Scheuefele & Tewksbury, 2007), both positions “are important platforms for finding answers about the role of media in society” (Maher, 2001, p. 93).

#### THE CHILEAN MEDIA SYSTEM IN PRESS AND TELEVISION

As has been pointed out, the reconstruction of the memory that the media can do is not free of intentions, but responds to the agendas and characteristics of

each medium and also of the system in which they are immersed (Tweel, 2016).

According to Godoy (2016), the Chilean press is characterized by a high concentration of ownership. *El Mercurio* of Santiago and *La Tercera*—both considered of conservative positions (Navia, Osorio, & Valenzuela, 2013) and belonging to the Edwards family and Copesa, respectively—are the two most important political newspapers in the country and those that most influence the debate of public opinion. Likewise, the Edwards and Copesa are the owners of *Las Últimas Noticias* and *La Cuarta*, respectively, two newspapers of national circulation and of sensationalist and popular nature that have the largest circulations in the country (Valida, 2016).

As for open television, since the 1990s a privatization process began in the country in which universities—supposedly entrusted to ensure the quality of information—have gradually been removed from property (Fuenzalida, 2013; Santa Cruz, 2017). Thus, *Chilevisión* was bought by the Turner group, *Canal 13* is majority owned by the Luksic Group, and the Bethia Group became the owner with the highest percentage of *Mega*. On the other hand, *TVN* is an atypical public channel, since it does not receive state funding and is financed exclusively by advertising, competing for the rating with the other three private stations (Godoy, 2016).

Regarding how the media in Chile inform, a recent empirical research conducted by Gronemeyer and Porath (2017) indicated that there is a tendency between *El Mercurio* of Santiago and *La Tercera* to frame their news with similar frames, which is in line with the criticism of the lack of informative pluralism in the press (Monckeberg, 2011). On the other hand, on television, research has established that poverty (Etchegaray & Matus, 2015) and ethnic features (Amigo, Bravo, Sécail, Lefebure, & Borrell, 2016) are stereotyped. Although these evidences are not related to memory, they do show that the press and television news programs in Chile are not innocuous when reporting.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to study the Chilean media as agents of memory regarding the figure of Fidel Castro, based on the coverage produced after his death at the end of November 2016.

The hypothesis is that the four main newspapers of national circulation—*El Mercurio* of Santiago, *La Tercera*,

*Las Últimas Noticias* and *La Cuarta* (Valida, 2016)—and the four television newscasts with the highest rating—*Teletrece*, *24 Horas Central*, *Ahora Noticias* and *Chilevisión Noticias* (IBOPE-Media, 2016)—not only reported on the death and funerals of the Cuban revolutionary, but due to the use of certain framings they were agents, from their own ideological positions and the characteristics of their mediums, for the construction of a memory around his figure.

It is a deductive investigation since we studied the most important frameworks that emerged after the analysis of the news of the press and of the open television (*funeral rite*, *contextualization* and *memory in debate*). According to the classifications of Carrasco-Campos and Saperas (2015) for framing research, this study is classified as empirical with quantitative and discourse analysis techniques (Van Dick, 1997, 2014).

The selected period was from the day following Raúl Castro's announcement in the news of his brother's death, on November 26, 2016, until a week later. This period was considered opportune to measure and establish comparisons between the different coverage of the media, in addition to covering the entire period in which the funeral procession toured the island of Cuba with the remains of Castro.

In the case of the written press, we added up the square centimeters dedicated to each frame, while in the news, we counted the minutes. We summed up the spaces dedicated to the death of Castro to make comparisons regarding the frames that prevailed in each media. Some themes of framing research of recent years with this type of method—measuring square centimeters or minutes in the media—are electoral campaigns (Martínez Garza, 2013), climate change (Águila Coghlan, 2013), terrorism (Yusof, Hassan, Hassan, & Osman 2013) and social movements (Elena, 2016).

The consideration of Tankard (2001) that, after observing all the elements that constitute the news—headlines, images, lead, sources, quotations, statistics, tables and figures—the frame is the central idea or organizer of all the information exposed was key to systematize the framing concept. We put a special emphasis on the categorization not only of the text and the audio, depending on the medium, but also of the images that accompanied them.

Regarding the reliability of the results, the news of both the press and television were coded by two independent judges, under the design of data reproducibility (Krippendorff, 1990), obtaining a reliability coefficient of 0.8.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After reviewing the news in the press and television newscasts, three frames of memory emerged –which will be discussed in the following sections– that were deemed common to all the media. According to their characteristics they were denominated as *funeral rite*, *contextualization* and *memory in debate*.

### FUNERAL RITE

One of the main significances that Durkheim (1976) gave to rites is that they explain what are the values that conduct society. Thus, for example, funeral ceremonies, as Rothenbuhler (1998) explains, not only allow us to understand the importance of the deceased, but they are a form of social communication full of symbolism. When this type of rite is mediated, new dimensions appear that complicate their understanding, given that “the media have the power to attribute meaning to the rites, to dramatize them, to remove them from the ordinary, and focus on specific acts and actors” (Sumiala, 2012, p. 45).

This frame was different in the press and television newscasts. In the newspapers, *La Tercera* dedicated 21% of the total space to the death of Fidel Castro; *Las Últimas Noticias*, 18%; *El Mercurio* of Santiago, 15%, and *La Cuarta*, 6%. In the television newscasts, the percentages were higher: 42% of the minutes in *24 Horas Central*, 40% in *Ahora Noticias*, 24% in *Teletrece* and 17% in *Chilevisión Noticias*. The greater predominance of this frame in the newscasts can be explained by the advantages of television, which allows to more easily account for the drama of funerals and the sensations of what was happening.

An image that was repeated constantly in this frame, both in the press and in the television newscasts, was that of Raúl Castro announcing the death of his brother on television, sitting in an office and wearing an olive green military suit. Newspapers like *Las Últimas Noticias* recounted this event like this:

Last night, at 00.29 in Chile, the leader of the Cuban revolution died. Eight years ago, he had transferred the power to his brother Raúl, but his figure was still omnipresent in the minds of all those who associated socialism in the West with his figure. The causes of his death were not reported, and the statement, read by the incumbent president, Raúl Castro, reported the following: “It is with great sorrow that I come before you to inform our people, friends of our America and the world, that today, November 25, 2016, at 10:29 p.m., the commander in chief of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz passed away. In fulfillment of Fidel’s

express will, his remains will be cremated. Saturday the 26th in the morning, the organizing committee of the funerals will give our people a detailed information of the tributes that will be offered to the founder of the Cuban Revolution. Until the victory, always”, he concluded (Villa, November 26, 2016, p. 20).

The almost five decades he governed and his more than ninety years transformed Fidel Castro into a permanent figure in public opinion. Although he had resigned from power in Cuba in 2008, he still had meetings with different Latin American leaders. Likewise, for almost a decade there had been false news about his death; for example, in 1997, a rumor in the form of a computer virus announced his passing. These circumstances explain why, in the mediatization of his death, this image of his brother was used again and again, since it was the undeniable proof of his passing, given that the announcer was a family member, but also the current leader of the country. As Sumiala (2012) points out regarding memory and death, the repetition made by the media of certain images has a character not only of limiting the event to a certain frame, but also of accepting it. For example, something similar happened with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy: the probative image was that of the shot that wounded him to death while driving in a convertible next to his wife in Dallas, United States.

After a series of ceremonies in the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, the funeral procession covered almost a thousand kilometers to deposit the remains of Fidel Castro in Santiago de Cuba on December 4. Along with illustrating most of the news with the olive green military trailer carrying the ashes, the Chilean media also profited from the funeral rite to explain who the deceased was and what it meant to his society, “massive farewell to Fidel (...) Thousands of people arrived to give the last goodbye to the Cuban leader” (*24 Horas Central*, November 29, 2016). Also, they talked about the type of social order that prevailed in that place, “young people are tired because they say that one thing is to respect the mourning and the other is to turn off the music and paralyze the country” (*Teletrece*, November 28, 2016). The media with their mediatic logic used the funeral rite as a way to show and inform about Cuban society, and therefore, about who Castro was.

Also regarding this frame, and following what was stated by Moeller (2002), we observed that one way of framing the death of political leaders is establishing similarities between the virtues of the deceased and the way they died. Thus, for example, in the case of the



Image 1. Raúl Castro announces on television the death of his brother Fidel. November 25, 2016

Source: Teletrece.

United States, Abraham Lincoln, Kennedy and Martin Luther King share not only certain positive values for their society, but they are symbolically united by the way they died. In the case of Castro, and not devoid of intentionality (Van Dijk, 2014), *El Mercurio* of Santiago published “The final parade of other communist leaders and a Bolivarian” (Lüther Gamboa, November 27, 2016, p. 4), news in which the Cuban funerals were compared with those of Lenin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, King Jong Il and Hugo Chávez, who –from the perspective of this newspaper– shared certain values and, after their deaths, also the funeral rites.

#### CONTEXTUALIZATION

All the media evaluated the figure of the revolutionary leader as relevant to understand the last decades of the history of the world and the specific period of the Cold War: “If there is something that cannot be denied is that Fidel Castro is part of the history of the world” (*Ahora Noticias*, November 27, 2016); “The revolutionary who brought the Cold War to Latin America” (Lüther Gamboa, November 27, 2016, p. 4); “With the death of Castro dies a political figure that marked the Cold War and Cuban and Latin American politics for almost six decades” (Parraguez, November 27, 2016, p. 4); “The last protagonist of the Cold War” (Tapia & Schwarze, November 27, 2016, p. 12). We must consider, as Van Dijk (2014) explains, that discourses should be analyzed from the context in which they are formulated, even if they allude to the past. This is why, as obvious as it may seem, the unanimous importance given by the media to Castro emerges from the current social situation

and with different knowledge and impressions than, for example, when the Cold War happened.

However, by contextualizing the memory regarding Chilean society, rather than explaining the political and historical processes that relate Castro to it, the media mediated this relationship based on certain events. The press and television newscasts addressed the Cuban leader’s ties with Chile mainly through black and white images with President Salvador Allende during his visit to the country in 1971: “Fidel Castro’s remains the longest visit that a foreign president has ever made to Chile” (Espinosa, November 27, 2011, p. 11); “Castro was in the peak of his life, 40 years old (...) he played basketball, he drank *pisco*, *chicha*, ate custard apple, wore a *poncho* and was declared illustrious son of two communes” (Foncea, November 27, 2016, p. 3). In this mediated memory, it is the visit, a specific fact, that explains the context and not the other way around. As stated by Zelizer (2011), the media cannibalize memory to certain simpler contents in pursuit of global understanding. On the other hand, as a memory that has not yet been built (Schudson, 1997), *Teletrece* had a story about unknown episodes of Castro’s visit to Chile (November 27, 2016), while *Chilevisión Noticias* interviewed young people from that period on how they remembered that event (November 26, 2016).

Other issues of the past that were discussed by the media were Castro’s role between 1973 and 1990, especially in *El Mercurio* of Santiago and *La Tercera*: “The role that Castro played in supporting the entry of weapons to Chile” (Peña, November 27, 2016, p. 11); “The day the FPMR made the attack on Pinochet, Fidel was on tour in Yugoslavia. His minister José Abrantes was the one who broke the news to him: ‘Commander, the ambush failed’” (Schwarze, November 27, 2016, p.2 4), etc. The fact that newspapers, in their contextualization of the past, prioritize some events to the detriment of others, explains that media memory is constructed from a selection of the past that reaffirms the media’s own agenda (Erl & Rigney, 2009; Kitch, 2002; Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011; Tweel, 2016).

While journalists work with current events to produce the news, they constantly make use of the past to explain the facts of the present (Humanes, 2003). In this regard, Castro’s death served the media to raise current international issues. “Chávez became the most faithful ally of Castro in Latin America” (Tapia & Schwarze, November 27, 2016, pp. 12-19); “With the arrival of Trump there is a lot of concern in the

Cuban government” (*Chilevisión Noticias*, November 26, 2016), etc.

This frame was different between the different media. Thus, while *Teletrece* dedicated 49%, *Ahora Noticias*, 27%, *El Mercurio* of Santiago, 23%, *La Tercera*, 23%, *Chilevisión Noticias*, 32% and *La Cuarta*, 30%, there were media such as *Las Últimas Noticias* and *24 Horas Central* that marked 6% and 10% respectively.

#### MEMORY IN DEBATE

Gugushvili, Kabachnik & Kirvalidze (2017, p. 1) point out that the media have an important role in how public figures “are evaluated and remembered, as they can be rehabilitated or vilified, or both, as these processes are contested”. This frame had a high presence in all media. Thus, in the press, *Las Últimas Noticias* devoted 76%, *El Mercurio* of Santiago, 61%, *La Cuarta*, 62% and *La Tercera*, 49%, while in television newscasts *Chilevisión Noticias* dedicated 51%, *24 Horas Central*, 47%, *Ahora Noticias*, 32% and *Teletrece*, 27%.

In this area, the different media called Fidel Castro differently, which is far from being something devoid of meaning or done randomly, and must be understood as a way of establishing their editorial line within the microstructure of discourse (Van Dijk, 2014). There is no agreement regarding how the Cuban leader should be remembered. While *El Mercurio* of Santiago and *La Tercera* referred to him as a dictator (although the newspaper of Copesa also called him president in one occasion), the rest of the media used terms that avoided this confrontation, as leader, ruler, etc.

On the other hand, proving that it was a figure still in debate, the television newscasts, taking advantage of the characteristics of their medium, broadcasted live the impressions of Castro’s death from antagonistic places. In Miami, they showed the excitement of the Cuban exiles:

Let us see how the announcement of his death was lived in Miami, where several Cuban dissidents met in the place called Little Havana to celebrate this news. Several shouted slogans such as freedom for Cuba, Viva Cuba libre. Several streets in Miami are closed due to the number of people who have come to celebrate (*24 Horas Central*, November 26, 2016).

At the same time, they reported from Havana on the pain of the population:

The Martí Square was filled with adherents to say the last goodbye to the leader of the Cuban Revolution. “Glorified be Fidel, you are in the heaven of revolutionaries, receive the affection of your people, Amen”.

Liturgical of hundreds of thousands who arrived today at the José Martí Square to receive Fidel Castro in his great pantheon. Today they say goodbye to their Commander (*Chilevisión Noticias*, November 28, 2016).

Another important aspect to note is that the media opted to build memory through the opinion of third parties. In the theory of the Spiral of Silence, Noelle-Neumann (1995) points out that the media offer greater visibility to opinions that are more popular. Both the newspapers and the newscasts valued, through the opinion of their sources, the figure of Castro, evidencing their own ideological agendas.

The coverage of opinions for and against was not balanced (table 2). In the opinions in favor was that of President Michelle Bachelet on Twitter, which was collected by all the media: “My condolences to President Raúl Castro for the death of Fidel, a leader for dignity and social justice in Cuba and Latin America” (Arévalo, November 27, 2016, p. 4), that of former President Ricardo Lagos, “The social progress of the Cuban people under Fidel is undeniable” (*Ahora Noticias*, November 26, 2016), and that of soccer player Diego Maradona, “I started to cry terribly, because Fidel was like my second father” (*La Cuarta*, November 27, 2016, p. 6).

While among the opinions contrary to Castro’s legacy was that of former President Sebastián Piñera:

It is one thing to send condolences to Castro’s family, because every death is a loss, and a very different thing is to forget or validate a political regime that for almost sixty years violated human rights and democracy (*Teletrece*, November 26, 2016).

Also in the adverse positions was the opinion of the President of the United States, Donald Trump: “Today, the world marks the passing of a brutal dictator who oppressed his own people for nearly six decades” (*24 Horas Central*, November 27, 2016).

To a lesser extent, opinions that were qualified as neutral were also covered, such as that of former US President Barack Obama: “History will record and judge the enormous impact of this singular figure on the people and world around him” (Desormeaux & Eppelin, November 27, 2016, p. 2) and that of Pope Francis: “I express my feelings of sorrow to our excellency and to the people of that beloved nation” (*24 Horas Central*, November 26, 2016).

As noted, the media discourses on memory are delimited by power relations (Foucault, 1979, 1992) and the freedom with which they select events from the past for present representations, depending in each

Epithets				
El Mercurio de Santiago	Leader	Dictator	Revolutionary	
La Tercera	Former ruler	Dictator	Guerrilla	President
Las Últimas Noticias	Leader	Former ruler	President	
La Cuarta	Bearded leader	Military	Former ruler	
Teletrece	Leader	Commander		
24 Horas Central	Controversial leader	Commander in chief	Revolutionary	
Ahora Noticias	Former president	Leader		
Chilevisión Noticias	Controversial leader	Revolutionary		

Table 1. Epithets used by the Chilean media to refer to the figure of Fidel Castro during the week of November 26 to December 3, 2016

Source: Own elaboration.

	In favor	Neutral	Against
El Mercurio de Santiago	9%	6%	85%
La Tercera	41%	2%	57%
Las Últimas Noticias	27%	26%	47%
La Cuarta	24%	3%	73%
Teletrece	55%	21%	24%
24 Horas Central	57%	8%	35%
Ahora Noticias	72%	0%	28%
Chilevisión Noticias	100%	0%	0%

Table 2. Percentages of square centimeters and minutes of the opinions in favor, against and neutral to the figure of Fidel Castro collected by the press and television newscasts, respectively, during the week of November 26 to December 3, 2016

Source: Own elaboration.

case on their own characteristics (Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011; Erlil & Rigney, 2009; Kitch, 2002; Tweel, 2016). Thus, as shown in table 2, *El Mercurio* of Santiago picked up more opinions contrary to the figure of Castro, while in television newscasts, especially in *Chilevisión Noticias*, the trend was the opposite.

## CONCLUSIONS

We can establish that the Chilean media were agents to construct the collective memory of the deceased

leader of the Cuban Revolution. Thus, after the analysis of the frameworks, we conclude that:

In the first place, from the death and the funeral rites of Fidel Castro, the media –with their logic and their characteristics– framed and mediated the information, contributing elements for the citizen valorization of memory, narrating who he was and about the particularities of his society. In this regard, the characteristics of the television support were more suitable to account for the drama of the funerals and the sensations about what was happening.



On the other hand, the Chilean media contextualized the figure of Castro in a mediated way. Thus, the memory that was built was reduced to certain events as opposed to more global explanations about his importance for Chilean society. The media limited the memories of Fidel Castro mainly to his visit to the country in 1971, almost from an anecdotal perspective, leaving aside or giving less coverage to his role in the Chilean path to socialism or his role during the years of General Pinochet's regime.

Finally, as a memory still under debate and that has not finished being built, the media greatly enhanced the figure of Castro from the opinion of third parties. In addition, they selected and prioritized certain memories to the detriment of others, evidencing coincidences with their own ideological agendas and visions. For example, the newspapers built a figure of Castro much more critical than television.

## DISCUSSION

It would be interesting to conduct new case studies on the mediatisation of memory from the perspective of the tendency of the media to the superficiality of

memories, rather than to a deep reflection of the past. If memory is part of the imaginary ties that unite society (Anderson, 1993), and considering the role of media in it, its simplification affects from identity to the values on which it is based.

Another aspect to consider is the proposal to use framing as a theoretical support and the framing of news as a methodological tool. If we consider that the media shapes the past in its present information (Erlil & Rigney, 2009; Kitch, 2002; Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011; Tweel, 2016), it seems appropriate to use framing to reveal the contexts and perspectives with which the media remember the past (Humanes, 2003).

This research, which used as a study phenomenon the death and funerals of a political figure so relevant in the recent history of Latin America as Fidel Castro, presents the methodological challenge of finding new memory frames in other similar events and to have the ability to extrapolate those that emerged to new cases.

Understanding how the media, through its news, frames the collective memory, allows to give clues about how societies remember the past and how they build their future.

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