

Evolution of poverty coverage between 2005 and 2014: What has changed and what hasn't in primetime television newscasts in Chile

Evolución de la cobertura de la pobreza entre 2005 y 2014: qué ha cambiado y qué no en los noticieros de televisión abierta en Chile

NICOLLE ETCHEGARAY, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile (nicole.etchegaray@udp.cl)

ALEJANDRA MATUS, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile (alejandra.matus@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolution of the coverage of poverty in Chilean primetime television newscasts. A comparison between data from two quantitative content analyses conducted in 2005 and in 2014 shows that the space given to news related to poverty and themes associated to poor people (natural disasters and accidents, crime and housing) have not changed substantially. However, the journalistic work shows an evolution: more diverse sources of information are consulted, there are longer news stories, and journalists cede the microphone to include the voice of experts and people in poverty. As for the image of those living in poverty, the common practice of presenting them with the appellative of *pobladores* (inhabitants of the poblaciones or segregated low-income neighborhoods) persists. However, they are not portrayed as mere passive recipients of aid as much as before; instead they play a more significant role as agents or co-agents of the solutions to their own problems.

Keywords: Television, poverty, content analysis, Chile, news coverage.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio explora la evolución que ha registrado el tratamiento informativo de las temáticas asociadas a la pobreza en noticieros de la televisión abierta chilena. Comparando los datos que emergen de dos estudios cuantitativos de contenido, aplicados en 2005 y 2014, se constata que las temáticas a partir de las cuales se retrata a segmentos pobres (desastres naturales y accidentes, delincuencia y vivienda) no han variado sustantivamente y persiste la costumbre de presentarlos con el apelativo de “pobladores” (en referencia a las sectores marginales en que habitan). Sin embargo, el trabajo periodístico muestra una evolución: se consulta a fuentes más diversas, se realizan notas más largas y los periodistas ceden el micrófono para incluir la voz de expertos y personas en situación de pobreza. Además, si antes se los retrataba como sujetos pasivos, receptores de ayuda, ahora crecen en el rol de agentes o coagentes en la solución a sus propios problemas.

Palabras clave: Televisión, pobreza, análisis de contenido, Chile, cobertura noticiosa.

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INTRODUCTION

From 1990 to 2013, the Chilean economy has grown at an average rate of 5.1%, purchasing power went from US\$7,330 to US\$15,487, malnutrition and hunger were virtually eradicated and the population living in poverty went from 45% to 14.4%. This, with certain nuances, since longitudinal studies show that between 1996 and 2006, one much larger proportion of the population (34%) went through transition periods of poverty, measured only by income (*Fundación Superación de la Pobreza*, 2013).

According to classical economic analysis, Chile is not a poor country. However, specialized institutions such as *Fundación Superación de la Pobreza* (*Foundation for Overcoming Poverty*) state that a more accurate appreciation of the phenomenon should consider its multidimensional and subjective dimension.

Living in poverty in Chile today relates to being invisible to the rest of society, both materially and in the non-recognition of the effort, which is also associated with impotence, i.e., not being able to do something. Ultimately, people is dominated by the perception of living with little control of their circumstances, where the course taken by their lives is away from their decision-making framework, and hence, of their liberty (*Fundación Superación de la Pobreza*, 2013).

The *Latinobarómetro* report (2013, p. 71) clearly reflects this subjective dimension of poverty. According to its data, in 2013 68% of Chileans perceive themselves as members of the “lower class”, although the report noted that the World Bank estimated the ‘real’ low class percentage in 53%, a discrepancy of 15 points. Meanwhile, 30% classified themselves as “middle class”, while the World Bank said that it was a 43%. The World Bank seems to underestimate the members of the lower class and overestimate the middle class. The explanation given by *Latinobarómetro* of this phenomenon is consistent with the analysis of *Fundación Superación de la Pobreza*, which argues that the economic goods owned by people consider themselves low class are not enough to make them feel middle class. Those who feel like “lower class” are missing intangible assets that give middle class status: for example, “power” (*Latinobarómetro*, 2013, p. 71).

If we assume that poverty in Chile is more extended than revealed by the information about income and has a subjective dimension—that affects most of the popu-

lation—, the social representation of individuals in poverty and the discrimination exerted on them by other social sectors are important elements in what means to ‘feel’ in poverty. Specifically, this study assumes that television news play a key role in this regard. In this way, the monitoring of changes in the way in which TV newscasts cover poverty can be an important contribution to understand how the meaning of being poor in Chile has (or not) changed.

MEDIA, DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPES

In the context of intergroup relations, discrimination refers to an inappropriate and potentially unfair treatment of the individuals for belonging to a particular group (Ungaretti, Etchezahar & Simkin, 2012). Several surveys, both in Europe and in Latin America, recognize that poverty or weak socio-economic situation is one of the main causes of discrimination towards people. In Chile, a 2013 survey indicates that almost half of people believe that “the poor are poor because they have not struggled to overcome their situation”, 40% believes that “it is good that employers ask for the place of residence of their potential workers, because there are certain communes where criminals and drug addicts are concentrated”, and 44% believes that “the poor are so careless with their appearance that approaching them gives fear” (Aymerich, Canales & Vivanco, 2003, pp.100-102).

Discrimination mainly originates from the emergence of negative stereotypes about a social group. The stereotype is a concept that Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses (2010) define as a set of beliefs about the characteristics and attributes of a group and its members, showing how the individual thinks and acts against them. According to the same authors, as well as Ungaretti et al. (2012), stereotypes are transmitted during the process of socialization through its agents, including family, peer groups, and the media.

Since most of the people know the world that is beyond their immediate environment through mass media, different areas of social sciences have studied the role of media in the creation, dissemination and strengthening of certain ways of seeing the world. The Cultivation Theory, for example, proposes that persistent exposure of persons to medial content generates the ‘cultivation’ of cognitive and emotional states regarding the observed themes. Thus, while media

would not be able to decide what their audiences think about the issues addressed, they would generate a relevant and cumulative influence (Gerbner, 1998). Another theory, the Agenda Setting (McCombs & Bell, 1996), states that media exert a great influence to define the issues of greatest importance in the public sphere; audiences would consider as more relevant the issues included by media in their thematic selection, while they would see as less relevant those with not space in the media. On a second level of the Agenda Setting, McCombs and Reynolds (2002) propose that journalism, in the process of selecting certain attributes and points of view to portray reality, offer keys to their interpretation, “frames” of interpretation able to generate cognitive effects in the audiences (Iyengar, 1990; Entman, 1995). From a different perspective, Social Cognitive Theory proposes that television offers images and models that are used by the audience in the development of scripts or schemes for different types of people (Bandura, 2002).

Associated with the social role of media, qualitative studies show the involvement they have in the construction of consensus on social order. The discursive hegemony capacity of media would help to impose representations of majorities (understood as groups of power, not demographically major segments), symbolically reproducing social inequality and strengthening the penetration of stereotypes of traditionally disadvantaged groups (Van Dijk, 2001; *Hogar de Cristo & Fundación para la Superación de la Pobreza*, 2004; Augoustinos & Every, 2007).

Noted the importance of mass media in the way we view and prioritize the various social groups, the interest of social sciences to investigate the way in which they are medially portrayed is understandable. Empirical research has shown that there is a stereotypical treatment towards all kinds of minorities, including racial (Lee, Bichard, Irey, Walt & Carlson, 2009), women (Signorielli, 1989; Correa, 2010), immigrants (Subervi, 2005; Van Dijk, 2001; Correa & Etchegaray, 2014), and people in poverty (Iyengar, 1990; Entman, 1995; Lens, 2002; Redden, 2011; Awad, 2014).

As in much of the world, in Chile it is particularly relevant to know the messages issued by broadcast TV, since it is the main media used by Chileans to inform themselves (2011 CNTV). However, the way in which television newscasts portray poverty has been little

explored. We know even less of changes in this treatment over time.

Partly motivated by this gap in our knowledge about the coverage of poverty in Chile, the *Alianza Comunicación y Pobreza* (Communication and Poverty Alliance) –composed of the *Hogar de Cristo*, *Fundación Superación de la Pobreza*, *Fundación Avina*, *América Solidaria* and the School of Journalism of the Diego Portales University– made in 2005 the first content analysis of the main Chilean television newscasts, especially focused on the coverage of poverty. Since then, the *Alianza* performs every year studies and seminars and presents an award to the best journalistic works associated with themes of poverty (*Pobre el que no cambia de mirada*). In this way, it has sought to also stimulate reflection on the more responsible ways to practice journalism and cause, both in editors and journalists, changes of shape and heart in the coverage of topics related to this subject.

Since the initial communication and poverty analysis is soon to meet a decade, this study wondered how much television coverage around the theme has changed. It is important to consider that, parallel to the interventions of the *Alianza*, Chile has lived important cultural and social changes in the last decade. Given that these changes have been associated by different authors with a phenomenon of empowerment of persons regardless of the dynamics of power (*Latino-barómetro*, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Valenzuela, Arriagada & Scherman, 2012), it is reasonable that they have also affected the ways in which people in poverty are related to the media and how they are journalistically covered (Awad, 2014). Therefore, in 2014 a second analysis of the main television newscasts content was made, which exactly replicates the methodology applied in 2005. The present study gives an account of the results of the comparison of data between 2005 and 2014.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: POVERTY IN THE MEDIA

The relationship between stereotypes and media messages has been studied since Lippmann (1922) introduced the concept in the academic field to refer to the image that a person mentally projects when they think of a particular social group. According to this author, one of the relevant spaces where these simplifications are reproduced and disseminated is the

media. Since that first approximation of Lippmann so far, researchers have identified several factors that contribute to the prevalence of social stereotypes in journalism. To get started, describing the events of real life in all its complexity is difficult, and this difficulty is accentuated in the work performed on the media, subject to important restrictions of time and space, as well as professional routines and organizational structures (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Furthermore, journalists would also be subjects of cultural hegemonies that permeate the medial speeches (Van Dijk, 2001). There is also evidence of ethnographic studies in press rooms, pointing to how journalists work based on certain assumptions regarding who their audiences are (middle and upper middle class) and to which of those segments advertisers point to, which would also contribute to the invisibilization of lower socioeconomic segments (Heider & Fuse, 2004). Ultimately, then, journalism would favor the use of visions of reality and of social groups that are not only simplistic but also tend to favor dominant perspectives.

It comes as no surprise, then, that empirical research evidences that the journalistic products under represent social minorities and reproduces stereotypes about them. Specifically around the coverage of poverty, numerous studies –mostly developed in the United States– show that, on the one hand, poverty is not a relevant topic in the agenda (Iyengar, 1990; Entman 1995; Bullock, Fraser Wyche & Williams, 2001), which somehow makes invisible this social problem. On the other hand, when issues related to poverty are covered, it is made in a problematic way. Iyengar's (1999) content analysis of the news of American television about poverty, between 1981 and 1986, for example, notes that television journalism transmits a decontextualized and stereotypical image of those living in poverty. Iyengar identifies two types of "frames" through which this issue is reported: the "episodic" frame, which includes the individual stories of individuals or families in poverty; and the "thematic" frame, with news that speak of poverty in a general and impersonal way. The study reveals that episodic news prevail notoriously, which means –according to the author–, that what is transmitted to the audience is the idea that poverty is a problem that must be overcome by sufferers, and not a structural problem, of which the government and the society as a whole are responsible for.

Identifying other kinds of frames, Entman (1995) shows that 39% of the television news on American television describe people in poverty regarding conducts that endangers the well-being of the community (e.g., crime, drugs and gangs), while 61% of the news is focused on the suffering of the poor (such as discrimination, poor health and inadequate health care). A similar study, which along television studies printed media, coincides in these findings, indicating that the poor are portrayed as dependent and passive, subjects that lack both initiative and moral values (Bullock et al., 2001). Studies focusing on the medial image of homeless people come to similar results (Schneider, 2011), concluding that stereotypical images picture those who are homeless as an "other", different, which drives away the audience of the possibility of identifying with the portrayed subjects and has impact on the little sympathy that Americans express for social spending in the fight against poverty.

Another transversal finding in studies is the lack of context in the representation of poverty (Entman, 1995; Redden, 2011; Schneider, 2013). Bullock and colleagues emphasize that, even though most of the articles can be neutral, they offer stories out of context, without information that allows the audience the understanding of what is represented, in such a way that the social policy is also trivialized (Bullock et al., 2001; Pardo, 2009).

Some analyses on Latin American press also indicate that "poverty in itself is not a newsworthy fact, therefore its media representation depends on a series of events whose inquiry illustrates the way in which the media represents the phenomenon" (Kitzberger & Pérez, 2008, p. 12). According to Kitzberger and Pérez, natural disasters provide a relevant interpretative frame, which portrays the poor as victims. There are also frames related to criminal acts, crime, drug trafficking and other situations of social violence, which lead to the criminalization of poverty. As for spokespersons, the authors note the high presence of economists as experts in the field, which would reveal "the enduring framing of poverty as a problem that requires a technical solution aimed at the optimization and creation of markets" (p. 82).

There are few studies on the medial representation of poverty in Chile. In 2004, the *Hogar de Cristo* and *Fundación Superación de la Pobreza* (FSP) (2004) con-

ducted a “participatory consultation” to those who use the social programs of those institutions, to know the perceptions of people in poverty on how they are represented on television. Based on their findings, respondents believe that television represents them linked to stigmatized social categories (such as criminals or drug addicts), which associates them with a bad appearance (dirty, badly dressed) and presents them with insufficient psychological, relational and existential attributes (homeless, abandoned, slackers, irresponsible, incapable).

In the field of television journalism, the 2005 *Alianza Comunicación y Pobreza* study concluded that only 4% of the news stories of the main newscasts were about themes associated with poverty, but that they mostly had a high journalistic interest, since they were advertised in the headlines and broadcasted in the first block of news. Regarding its content, the news stories essentially showed events out of context (indicating the fact that originated the news, without causes or solutions) and the main voice was that of the journalist (above community authorities, experts, politicians, or other actors). The topics more associated with poverty according to this study were: “housing”, “accidents, tragedies and natural disasters” and “crime”. The less associated with the poverty issue was “culture”. The predominant image of people living in poverty was a *poblador* (inhabitant of segregated settlements, where only reside socio-economically poor people), which is the “receiver” of the action of other agents (not an agent or co-agent) in overcoming its problems. The State, on the other hand, appeared as the actor that mostly manages the attendance (*Alianza Comunicación y Pobreza*, 2005).

A more recent study, which combined content analysis, participant observation and interviews with television journalists (Awad, 2014), found that the persisting negative stereotypical representations of poverty in the Chilean media is a result of a complex relationship between journalists and people in poverty consulted by them. According to Awad (2014), persons living in poverty in Chile in 2014 would not be simply victims of media coverage and the authorities, but they would also have a degree of major agency regarding these other actors.

Although very different in its methodology, the study of Awad would point to major transformations both in society and in the Chilean journalism since

the *Alianza Comunicación y Pobreza* led the analysis of news in 2005. Specifically, there have been noticeable changes in the behavior of the Chilean population, in particular of young people, which has expressed massive and publicly its discontent on issues referred to the persistent state of socio-economic inequality in a multiplicity of areas, such as education (Valenzuela, Arriagada & Scherman, 2015). The most current analysis of the Chilean political situation speaks of a social empowerment merged with a deepening into distrust towards institutions (Mayol & Azócar, 2011).

At the same time, the informative offer on television has increased in this period, with the emergence of cable channels offering news 24 hours a day, and with the extension of the main newscasts on broadcast television from 60 to 90 minutes (from 2010¹). This extension is associated with the increase in ordinary or non elitist sources and more dramatic and opinionated treatment of certain subjects (CNTV 2011, Awad, 2014).

A decade away of the first general survey on television newscasts and poverty in Chile, and given the transformations of the last decade, the question of research that guides this study arises: How has the journalistic treatment of the issues related to poverty in the main newscasts of the broadcast TV in Chile evolved between 2005 and 2014? More specifically, there are three specific objectives: to investigate if the importance given to the topics related to poverty has evolved and how; if the quality of journalism in this matter has changed, and how; and, finally, if the image of people living in poverty projected through the news has evolved, and how.

METHODOLOGY

To study the evolution that has occurred in the journalistic treatment of poverty on the television news, and answer the proposed research objectives, we will compare the measuring of a series of variables at two times: 2005 and 2014.

As mentioned above, the first study was executed in 2005 on behalf of the *Alianza Comunicación y Pobreza*, sponsored by the National Television Council (CNTV by its Spanish acronym), which facilitated the recording of all requested newscasts. A quantitative analysis content was made on all the main newscasts broadcasted by open TV channels between March 1 and June 30

2005. The code sheet was developed by experts of the two institutions, who trained two research assistants to apply it to the whole of the audiovisual material.

The study was replicated in 2014. To make the comparison possible, all the news broadcasted by open TV channels between March and June were again analyzed, the same code sheet was used, and only the assistants responsible for the encoding of data changed, as well as some of the professionals in charge of the training. CNTV again sponsored the study, providing the recording of the main newscasts of the five studied channels: La Red, TVN, Chilevisión, Mega and Canal 13. Each month, both assistants codified the news of three channels, so that was always one of the five channels was encoded by both assistants (a little over 20% of the total number of material), allowing to calculate the reliability of the encoding process. Inter-coders reliability was measured through the Holsti coefficient, which showed a minimum value of 84% and a maximum of 96% for the analyzed variables. (In headlines: 96%, theme: 92%, block: 86%, type of subject: 84%, archetype of the subject: 96%, attitude of the subject: 91%, structure of opportunities: 85%, spokesperson: 95%).

The analysis unit was each audiovisual news story on poverty or associated with it, considering the news that contain key concepts as poor, poverty, destitution, homeless people, *pobladores*, inequality, vulnerability, and other similar concepts, or images of people and/or environments associated with low socio-economic segments. We thus included all news stories alluding to a context, character or associated with the poverty situation, even if the focus of the news story was a different theme.

In 2005 content associated with poverty was found in 471 news of an approximate total of 11,000 broadcasted in the analyzed period; in 2014, under the same criteria, 1,409 news with content associated with poverty were selected and analyzed of a total of approximately 26,000 news broadcasted in the period (the total of broadcasted news corresponds to estimates made by CNTV). The big difference in the total of news broadcasted between the two measurements is due to the increase in the duration of the television newscasts, which went from 60 minutes in 2005 to 90 in 2014. The total number of cases was entered into a base in the SPSS program, for analysis and data crossing.

DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES AND INDICATORS

The applied analysis code sheet included more than 30 variables. The following are those that were used in this study in particular.

Variables related to the relevance of the news. "Presence of the news in headlines" was measured as a dichotomous variable (0=no; 1=yes). The "block" in which they appear was divided in accordance with the total of sections divided by the commercial announces (1 to 5) total. The "length of the news" had as response a scale of 4 categories: 1 minute or less, more than 1 minute, more than 2 minutes, longer than 3 minutes.

Variables related to the image of poverty. The "theme of the news" was treated as a multi-answer variable and had as categories: education, housing, basic services, health, culture, conflict, solidarity, violence, crime and drugs, accident, tragedy or natural disaster, participation, employment, religion, church, economics, in addition to the category "other". The "archetype" of the subject in poverty relates to the type of person in poverty shown in the news; the response categories were: *poblador* ("person living in urban places of low socio-economic level"), peasant, student, urban workers, vagabond, street children, indigenous, older adult, none, other. The "prevailing attitude of the actor" responds to the kind of participation of the subjects in poverty in overcoming the problem, having as categories of response: receiver (action of others in overcoming the problem), agent (manages the solution to the problem without support from others), co-agent (receives assistance or collaboration but is also involved), or none (the way in which the problem is faced or solved is not indicated). Linked to this variable, the "structure of opportunities" responds about who is the agent that performs the action to overcome poverty or the informed problem, and the categories were: State, civil society, collective-communities, individuals-family, market or none.

Variables related to the journalistic treatment of the news. The variable "origin of the news" responds to the mechanism whereby the information enters the news and its response categories were: isolated fact, journalistic initiative (not necessarily contingent theme perceived as a proactive attitude of the newscast), continuity (facts in development, continuation of the reporting of a previous news) or not identified. The variable "spokesperson" responds to who speaks or is the main

source of information in camera; response categories were: journalists, people living in poverty, politicians, authorities, experts and others.

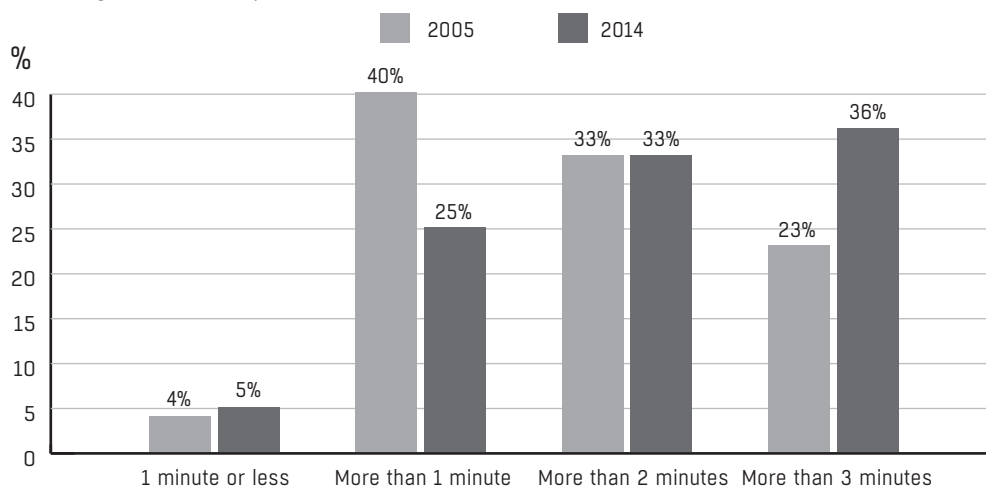
RESULTS

According to the 2014 study, the percentage of news relating to themes or characters associated with poverty in the Chilean newscasts remains low and relatively stable between the two measurements. In 2005 it was 4%; in 2014, 5%. Below are the results comparing both studies for each of the variables and indicators mentioned above.

RELEVANCE

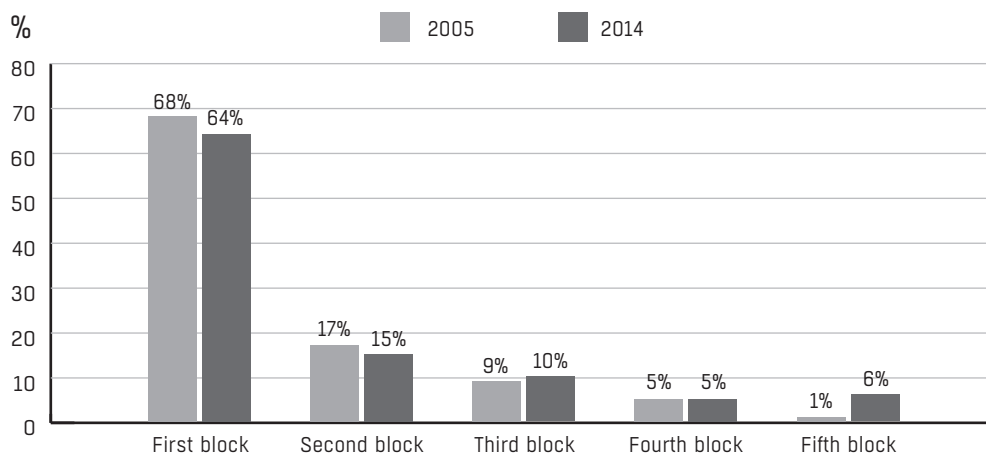
The importance or connotation that newscasts give about poverty is high in both of these measurements, and even increases from one measurement to another. On the one hand, in 2014 the presence of this type of news stories in headlines is greater: from 46% in 2005 to 56% in 2014 (chart 1). In addition, the amount of extensive stories increases at the expense of the short ones: those of 1 minute or less go from 4% to 5%, those of more than one minute descend noticeably, from 40% to 25%, while those that last more than two minutes remain in 33%. Longer notes, of more than 3 minutes, climb strongly from 23% to 36%.

Chart 1. Length of the news pieces



Source: Own elaboration.

Chart 2. Location of the news in the newscast

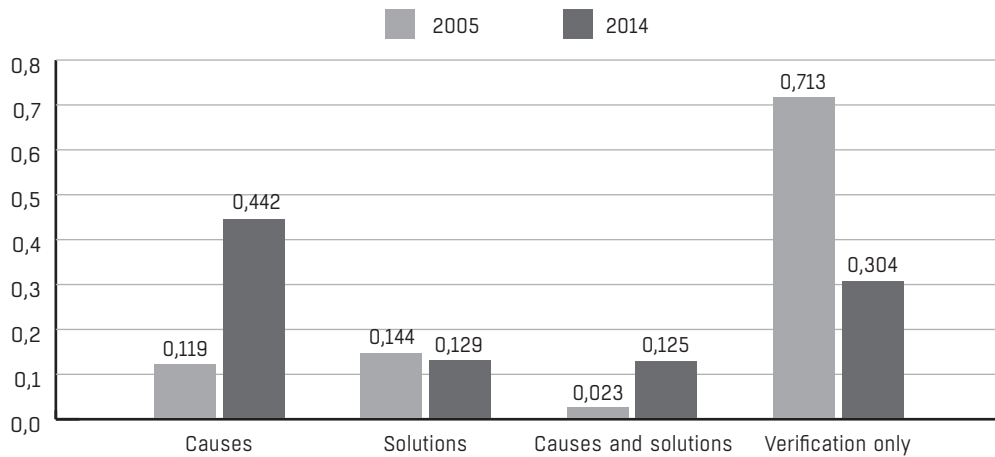


Source: Own elaboration.

The distribution of the news within the newscast has remained relatively stable, indicating that these news are considered relatively relevant both ten years ago and nowadays. As shown in chart 2, news stories asso-

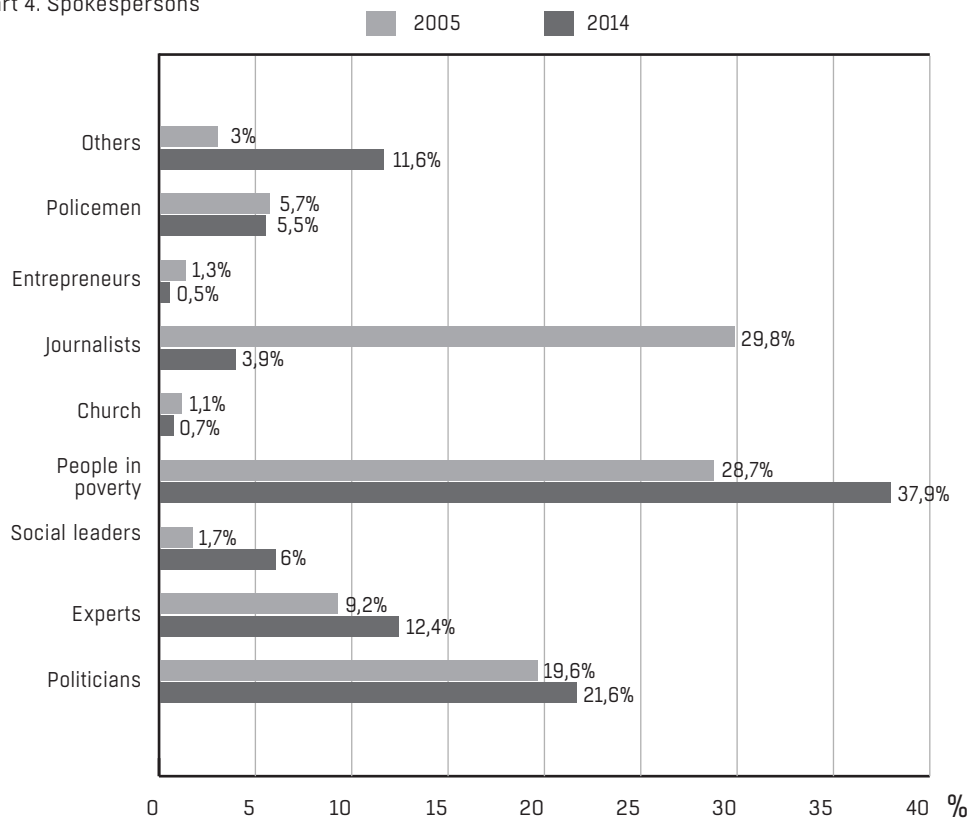
ciated with poverty are mostly transmitted in the first block of news (68% and 64% in the two measurements), their presence goes down a lot in the second block and are broadcasted very little in the last blocks of news.

Chart 3. Information contained in the news



Source: Own elaboration.

Chart 4. Spokespersons



Source: Own elaboration.

QUALITY AND JOURNALISTIC APPROACH

If in 2005 71% of the news was limited to state a fact without giving context (causes or solutions), in 2014 such news stories go down to 30%, while those that include information about the causes of the events strongly increase (12% to 44%), as well as those that explain, in addition, the solutions of the reported facts (2% to 13%). News that only explain solutions of problems related to poverty go down marginally from 14% to 13% (chart 3).

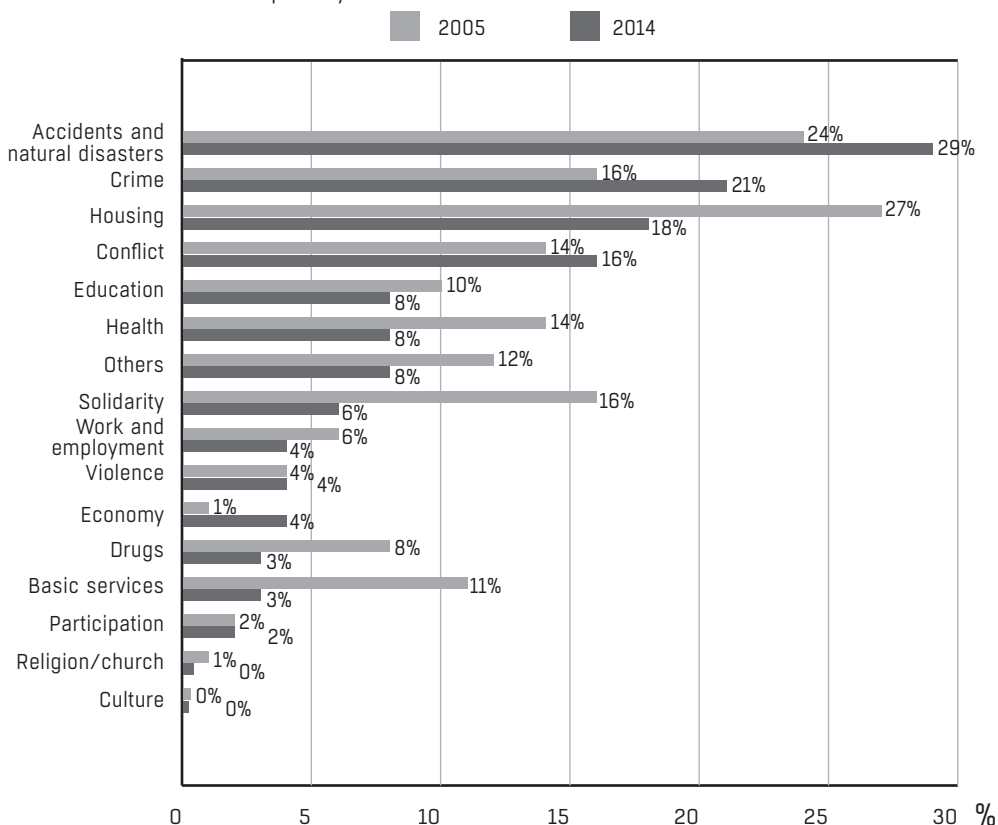
Another indicator of the journalistic approach that shows an evolution is the sources consulted in camera, i.e., who have a voice within the audiovisual news analyzed. In this sense, it is notorious that journalists cede the microphone. Chart 4 shows that, in 2005, they were “the” voice explaining the fact reported almost in 30% of the news stories; in 2014, this figure falls to 3.9%. In contrast, in 2014 the voice is given significantly more to the word persons in situation of poverty that climb in the role of spokespersons from 28.7% to 37.9% and become the main sources. Social leaders, meanwhile,

climb from 1.7% to 6% in their role as spokespersons. Consultation to experts also increases (9.2% to 12.4%) as well as to politicians (19.6% to 21.6%) to build news stories and provide explanations of the news events associated with poverty.

REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY

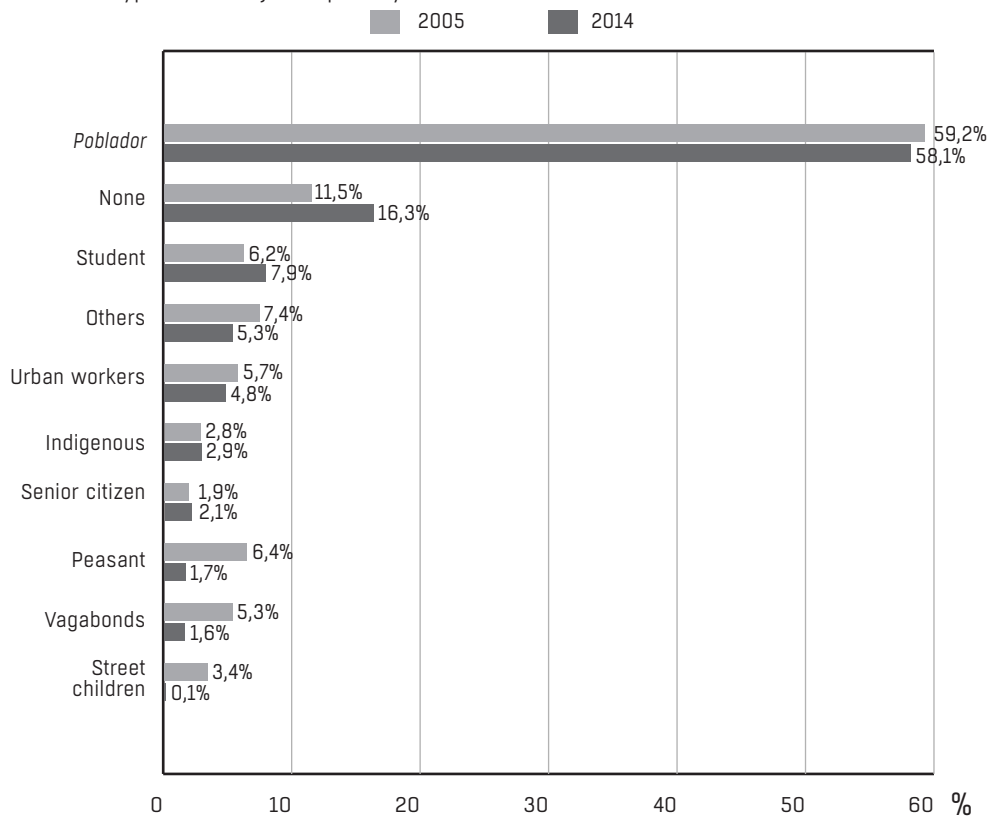
Within the themes that appear linked to poverty, the most important three are repeated in the two measurements, but the relative order changes. Chart 5 shows that, by 2014, “accidents, tragedies and natural disasters” ranks first, with 29% of the total of news on poverty, while in 2005 it covered 24% and was in second place. “Crime” appears in second place in 2014, subject that occupied the third place in the previous measurement (from 16.1% to 21%). The theme “housing”, which in 2005 held first place, becomes the third, and goes down from 27.4% to 18%. In fourth place in 2014 is “conflict”, with 16%, a place shared in 2005 with “health”, with 14% each. “Culture” is the theme least related to poverty in the two measurements.

Chart 5: Themes related to poverty



Source: Own elaboration.

Chart 6: Archetype of the subject in poverty



Source: Own elaboration.

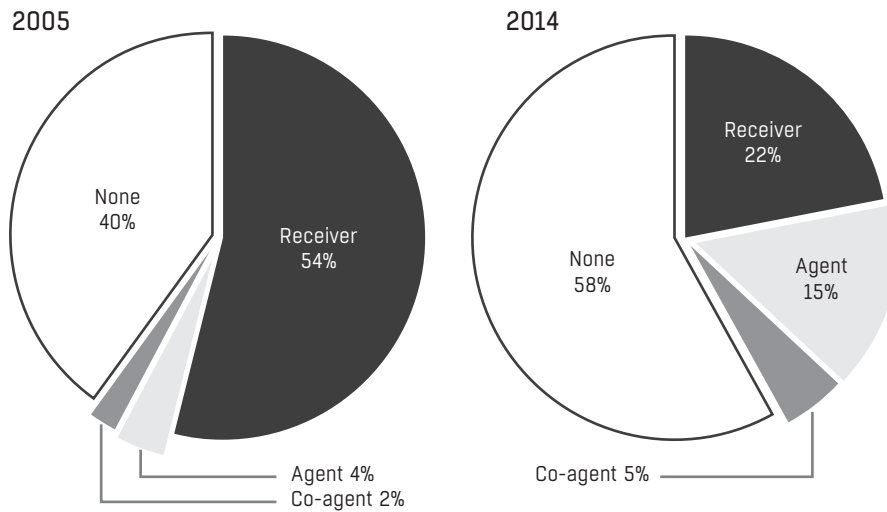
The variable “archetype”, detailed in Chart 6, shows that the type of person in poverty most reflected by the news –both in 2005 and in 2014– is that of *poblador* (58% and 59%, respectively), defined as the one who lives in settlements socially identified as places of low socioeconomic level. The second category in both measurements is none, i.e. when the news does not identify people in poverty as inhabitants of segregated settlements; it is frequent in this case that they keep an indefinite image, one that in addition increases from 11.5% to 16.3% between the two measurements. Also increases the number of students associated with poor segments, from 6.2% to 7.9%. The images that most descend are peasants (6.4% to 1.7%), vagabonds (1.6% to 5.3%) and street children (3.4% to 0.1%).

In the prevailing “attitude” of the subject in poverty is where one of the most important changes between 2005 and 2015 occurs. In 2005 there was a clear pre-

dominance of “the receiver”, i.e., the actor who receives help and solutions from other spaces (54%), while in 2014, less than half (22%) was in this category, as shown in chart 7. On the other hand, the subject in poverty that manages alone the solutions to its problems increases notoriously in 2014 (from 4% to 15%), as well as the individual who collaborates with other agents in the solutions (2% to 5%). In both of these measurements, much of the news does not identify what type of agent solves or is capable of solving the problems raised (40% in 2005 and 58% in 2014), despite the increase in this category.

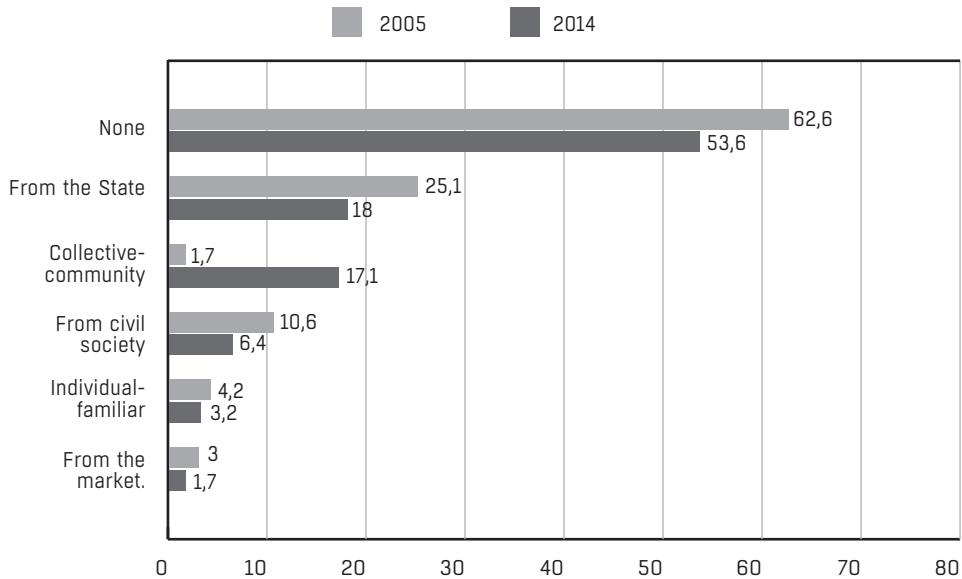
In close relationship with the previous variable, chart 8 shows the variable “opportunity strategy”, this indicates who are identified as agents that give solutions to the problems faced by people living in poverty. If the variable “attitude” was specifically about the role(s) of person(s) in poverty included in

Chart 7. Predominant "attitude" of the actor



Source: Own elaboration.

Chart 8: Structure of opportunities



Source: Own elaboration.

the news, the variable "opportunity strategy" measures from where comes this solution in a broader sense or, to be more specific, who are made visible as generators of solutions. The results show that mostly there is not a journalistically research regarding who offers the solution (category "none" reaches 62.6% in 2005 and 53.6% in 2014). When they are mentioned, solutions are mainly linked to the State (25.1% and

18%, respectively, in 2005 and 2014). A remarkable result is that the second-largest manager of solutions in 2014 is represented by collective-community agents, climbing strongly from 1.7% to 17.1%. Solutions by civil society go down from 10.6% in 2005 to 6.4% in 2014. Also, individual and familiar solutions descend from 4.2% to 3.2%, as well as those coming from the market, that goes from 3% to 1.7%.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies indicate that exposure to media content on poverty has an effect on the attitudes of the society facing the problem and of people living in poverty, as well as in what it means to live in poverty. It is important, therefore, to systematically study how the media portrays those living in poverty. Due to its high penetration, representations on television are especially important.

The results described in this article allow us to note that in the last ten years the journalistic treatment of poverty in Chile has evolved substantially in some areas, while it maintains important and little encouraging practices that would reinforce stereotypes and discrimination. One of the more obvious continuities between television coverage in 2005 and 2014 is that news associated with poverty has a very small presence within the themes treated in the news. Their proportion goes from 4% to 5% of the total amount of news. We can deduce from this that newscasts have little interest in covering issues related to the vulnerability of disadvantaged social groups, despite the fact that – as discussed in the introduction –, they represent large segments of society, which vary, depending on the type of measurement, between 14.4% and 34%; and when considering self-perception, they exceed 60%. In the light of the theory of the Agenda Setting (McCombs & Bell, 1996), we can assume that this affects the little relevance given by Chileans to “poverty” among the most important issues that must be solved by the State. According to *Latinobarómetro* (2013), this topic occupies the eighth place of importance in the list of most important topics for Chileans, below crime, education, health and others.

The main theme of the analyzed news is a key variable. The results show that the themes by which the poor segments appear as news subjects continue to be those related to the vulnerability to which they are exposed –as “accidents, tragedies and natural disasters”, or housing problems– or those that bind them to anti-social attitudes, especially crime and conflict.

Certain changes in coverage can be attributed to temporary incidents. The prominence of “housing” in the first measurement and “accidents, tragedies and natural disasters” in the second, for example, can be explained by cyclical situations that marked the news in the respective years of analysis. In 2005, one of the most important issues on the political agenda were the

campaigns of Serviu (Service of Housing and Urban Development, dependant of the respective Ministry) to reduce housing debt, some scandals associated with the poor quality of social housing that the government was giving away, and a major flood in the Center-South of the country, product of weeks of heavy rains. In 2014, an earthquake registered in the North of the country, as well as a devastating fire in the city of Valparaíso, governed the news agenda for weeks, displacing the news related to housing. Both issues are, however, a same central feature of poverty: the permanent state of vulnerability in which live the citizens who suffer it. Accidents and natural disasters impact more forcefully to those who have less means to deal with them.

Particularly worrying is the strong relationship established between poverty and crime in news (is the second most commonly associated with poverty in 2014; the third in 2005). Although the study does not distinguish if the poor are portrayed as victims or perpetrators of crime, it is likely that this strong linkage has an impact in the reaffirmation of social stereotypes, which limits the possibilities of social cohesion, and keep a segment of the population subjected to discrimination by other groups. This emphasizes the subjective vulnerability experienced by those who perceive themselves as part of the so-called lower class.

It is noteworthy that other issues that directly affect the most vulnerable segments, such as education, were so poorly linked to poverty. This is especially striking in the socio-political context that lived Chile during the year in which underwent the last measurement, when there was a broad public discussion about the educational reform that was underway, and whose accent was precisely the need to correct the enormous social segregation resulting from the current system.

Following with continuities, it is proved that the archetype of “*poblador*” as the image of the person in poverty continues to be the one most frequently projected by newscasts. It is a stereotypical concept in itself, which considers all persons who live in segregated settlements as representatives of the same category, wide and very abstract, but other than the citizens who inhabit non segregated settlements sectors, who the news do not associate with “*pobladores*”.

However, the comparison between the two measurements also allows noting a series of significant changes, positive developments in some of the variables associ-

ated with the journalistic approach and the image of persons in poverty projected in the news.

One of the main differences registered between 2005 and 2014 news refers to a clear decrease of news limited to the simple observation of events, and the increase of news stories that include possible causes and solutions. Coincidentally, the duration of the news related to these topics increases. Likewise, in 2014 there is greater diversity in the spokespersons: journalists cede their place as principal rapporteurs of the events (as was the case in 2005) to give voice to social leaders, poor people, experts, and politicians called to solve and explain the problems described in the news.

On the structure of opportunities, a positive evolution between the study of 2005 and 2014 is that information that shows how the community organized to solve its problems and shortcomings increased (1.7% to 17.1%). The image projected of people in poverty is no longer of a mere passive and helpless character facing the problems, but it recognizes a more active role or agent role. Consistent with this result, the newscasts analyzed in 2014 revealed a positive trend in the percentage of news stories in which the person in poverty was represented as agent or co-agent of the solutions to the problems, reducing those that portrayed it only as a receiver.

In short, there has been a positive evolution in the quality of the information related to poverty. However, newscasts continue paying little attention to the issue (considering the scant percentage of related news stories); the association to topics that identify this population with situations of vulnerability or anti-social acts persists, leaving other topics outside even when they concern them directly; and the archetype of “*poblador*” to identify individuals from these groups remains.

It should be noted that the media, in particular television channels whose newscasts have been ana-

lyzed in the studies mentioned here, have style manuals that consistently point out among their purposes the promotion of democratic values and prohibit to their journalists expressions of discrimination against minorities. However, this comparative study shows that journalistic practice is persistent in the maintenance of certain social stereotypes for people in poverty. These has multiple consequences, starting with the perception of discrimination, social exclusion and inequity that people in poverty manifested in different studies (*Fundación Superación de la Pobreza*, 2006; *Hogar de Cristo & Fundación para la Superación de la Pobreza*, 2004).

On a different level, it has been shown that in societies where stereotypes towards social groups are highly entrenched, they not only affect society in general, but the sense of reality of the members of those minority groups, generating self-stereotypes (e.g. Hogg & Turner, 1987; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). This way, groups living in poverty and who are consistently exposed to negative ideas about themselves could fall into a self-stigmatization. Finally, the perception of discrimination affects negatively the levels of confidence expressed by persons toward each other (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). And according to the research of Robert Putman (1995), the levels of interpersonal trust in a society are strongly correlated with its potential for economic growth and development.

Ultimately, arguments to defend the relevance of identifying and combating stereotypes towards the vulnerable segments of society abound. This work aims to contribute to the identification of stereotypes created and distributed through journalistic work, understanding that the stereotypes are an important obstacle to social cohesion. Future studies should monitor the phenomenon not only in television but in all the mass media consumed in the country.

FOOTNOTES

1. By 2015, some of the newscasts returned to 60 minutes. However, at the time of measurement, the newscasts had the mentioned duration.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Nicolle EtcheGARAY Thielemann, Journalist and graduated in Social Communication from Universidad Diego Portales. Master in Political Science of Pontificia Universidad Católica of Chile. Assistant Professor of the School of Journalism and researcher at the Center of Research and Publications at the Faculty of Communication and Letters.

Alejandra Matus Acuña, Journalist of Pontificia Universidad Católica of Chile. Master in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School, USA. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Communication and Letters of the Universidad Diego Portales (UDP). Coordinator of the Communication and Poverty programme and the Unesco Communication and Citizen Participation lecture in the School of Journalism of UDP.