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Discursive construction of human rights violations: the case of the Chilean Rettig report

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Abstract: Drawing on discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, this paper analyzes the discursive construction of human rights violations in the report of the Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also called Rettig Commission. We show that there is a strong contrast in how the victims and perpetrators are represented in the case descriptions. While the victims are clearly identified, the perpetrators are not identified individually. Moreover, through a variety of strategies, the agent of the human rights violations often remains vague or unexpressed. Furthermore, we show that different sources of information are included in the event description – entailing different windows of attention – save the perpetrator's testimonies. By doing so, the report clearly privileges in its discursive construction of the events the non-attribution of responsibility over the completeness of information principle.

Keywords: agentivity, human rights, dictatorship, perpetrator, victim, Chile

1 Introduction

In this paper, we will analyze the discursive construction of human rights violations in the report published in 1991 by the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (commonly known as the Rettig Commission, named after its chairman). This report, henceforth referred to as Rettig report, was brought out shortly after the fall of the Pinochet regime (1973–1990) and was the first official account of the human rights violations committed during

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this regime. The aim of this article is to show how the responsibility of the perpetrators is mitigated in the report. In doing so, we wish to address why sections of society consider that the report fails in representing the truth. Our central research question concerns what information is disclosed in the first volume of this report.[1] Specifically, we analyze, firstly, how the victims and perpetrators are presented in the case descriptions in the report and, secondly, what sources of information are included. We address these questions through a linguistic approach combining insights from cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis.

Whereas previous research concerning human rights violations focused on the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see, for example, Anthonissen and Blommaert 2006) or on testimonials (e.g. Levey 2010; Levey 2014), the Rettig report represents a very different type of discourse (cf. Section 2), of a more legal nature and without the inclusion of testimonials. Thus, the report epitomizes a different discourse type (e.g. it does not include dialogues or transcriptions of oral testimonials) and requires a specific analytical framework for which we will draw on different methodologies.

Our study is situated in the realm of cognitive linguistics, in that we consider language a means of conceptualizing past events, i.e. it is a way of windowing attention (Talmy 2000), thus focusing on certain aspects and defocusing others. Our approach is inspired by Frame Theory (Fillmore 2003) as a means of analyzing the concepts activated by a specific expression, and we will take into account a variety of agent expressions with varying degrees of prototypicality according to their lexical and constructional characteristics (see Cuenca 2003; Delbecque 2014). Finally, we will also draw on discourse analysis, especially Van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor analysis. Thus, we will combine in our analysis the identification of the victims and perpetrators, the inclusion of sources in the case descriptions and the representation of the event as a whole.

This article is structured as follows. We will first present the Rettig report in its historical context (Section 2), before proceeding to the analysis of the identification of the victims and perpetrators (Section 3) and of the representation of the sources of information that are included in the event narrative (Section 4). In the discussion (Section 5), we will address the sociopolitical consequences of this analysis. In the conclusion (Section 6), we will show how a discursive analysis of the Rettig report reveals that non-attribution of responsibility has

1 Our analysis covers the first volume of the report, which deals with human rights abuses from September to December 1973. The second volume concerns abuses from 1974 to 1990, when the repressive system – mainly operated by the DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional) – was fully consolidated (cf. Rettig report, vol. II: 449).

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been given precedence over completeness of information concerning the human rights violations committed under the Pinochet regime.

2 The Rettig report

The so-called Rettig report, written by the Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación, was the first in a series of reports on human rights violations in Chile. Truth and reconciliation commissions, as well as how they deal with the crimes committed by military regimes and/or during internal conflicts, are being studied for various countries (Hayner 2008; Brants and Klep 2013) and from various perspectives: historical (among others Grandin 2005), literary (Arfuch 2013; De Vivanco Roca Rey 2013), and juridical (Cabezas Del Fierro et al. 2013). Thus, Cabezas del Fierro et al. (2013: 159) study the Right to Memory and its problems from a juridical perspective. This right to memory is derived from the human right to dignity but is not enshrined as such in Chilean legislation (Cabezas Del Fierro et al. 2013: 158). It includes uncovering the truth about past events and maintaining personal data and traces of the existence of individuals. However, truth and reconciliation commissions have dealt in varying ways with the disclosure of information regarding the victims and perpetrators,[2] and regarding the human rights violation events (Grandin 2005; Milton 2007: 7).

The events chronicled in Volume I of the Rettig report concern the three-month period following the coup that led to Pinochet, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and leader of the military junta, taking over leadership of the country from left-wing president Allende. Right after the end of Pinochet's dictatorship, the Rettig Commission was established by decree, within the following official legal framework:

> [...] Establish a framework that is as complete as possible concerning the serious facts of human rights violation, its antecedents and circumstances; [...] [The Commission] **will not therefore be able to give a verdict on the responsibility** that, according to the laws, may be borne by **individual persons** for the facts of which it has acquired knowledge.[3] (Rettig report 1996: xix)

2 We are aware that terminology is sensitive, and that not all involved may consider themselves victims or may wish to be referred to as such. However, for the purposes of the present study, this choice seems the most straightforward one.

3 "[...] Establecer un cuadro **lo más completo posible** sobre los graves hechos de violación a los derechos humanos, sus antecedentes y circunstancias; [...] **No podrá**, en consecuencia, **pronunciarse sobre la responsabilidad** que con arreglo a las leyes pudiera caber a **personas individuales** por los hechos de que haya tomado conocimiento" (Rettig report 1996: xix). Bold type has been introduced by the authors of this article. The page numbering of the 1991 printed version and that of the 1996 revised version available online are different. In order to facilitate consultation of

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Thus, the decree stipulates, on the one hand, that the Commission should try to establish a framework that is as complete as possible and that would be in line with present-day concepts of the right to memory (as described in Cabezas Del Fierro et al. 2013); on the other hand, however, it also states that the Commission is not legally competent to assign individual responsibility.[4] Its aim, as with many other truth commissions, was then to be situated at an ethical and emotional level, rather than at a legal level (Zalaquett 1999; Atria 2003; Grandin 2005: 47). Indeed, Grandin claims that through this Commission

> Chile [...] retained the notion that official inquiries into past abuses were needed to reinforce social solidarity but jettisoned, due to political exigencies, the required mechanism that [...] bestowed those inquiries with legitimacy: the ability to hold the worst abusers legally accountable. (Grandin 2005: 55)

As pointed out by Brants and Klep, in spite of this lack of legal competence, the "Rettig Commission operated with remarkably rigorous legal criteria and legal tone" (Brants and Klep 2013: 44).

Admittedly, putting in place a commission whose actions would have legal consequences, would have been much more complex and would have taken longer. The swift formation and operationalization of the Rettig Commission appears to be partly motivated by a desire to recognize the human rights abuses in the relatively short term. In addition to establishing the legal framework, the introduction to the report also details the types of sources consulted in compiling the report, more specifically the "testimonies of those who voluntarily wished to cooperate [...] the cooperation of all those people and organizations

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the reports, we use the numbering of the online version throughout this article. The revisions in the 1996 edition concern the correction of some first and last names in the report, but do not affect the aspects we analyze.

4 The insistence on the fact that the outcomes of the Commission's work have no legal value may be due to the fact that Chile had by then already signed and ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the Inter-American Convention to prevent and sanction torture. Interestingly, Chile made a reservation concerning the international arbitration of the UN Convention and a similar reservation concerning the possibility of international arbitration in the Inter-American Convention, both of which seem to be in line with Chile's insistence that the Rettig report could not have legal consequences either. Although this first reservation was withdrawn in 1999 and Chile recognized the competence of the Committee against Torture in 2004, these changes have no retroactive power. Thus, they cannot concern cases of torture committed under the Pinochet regime. From a juridical point of view, the existence of an Amnesty law (voted under Pinochet) is the main reason for impunity and, as such, is heavily criticized by human rights organizations (see, for example, Amnesty International 2004).

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[Vicaría de la Solidaridad]" (Rettig report 1996: XVI).[5] Crucially, as the report only deals with deaths or disappearances, no testimonies of victims could, of course, be included.

Given this context and the legal framework of the Rettig Commission, we will now look into the way in which victims and perpetrators are identified in the report (Section 3), and the way in which the different sources of information are included in the case descriptions (Section 4).

3 Identification of the victims and perpetrators

In this section, we will first analyze the ways in which the victims are identified (Section 3.1) in the case descriptions and, second, the identification of the perpetrators (Section 3.2).

3.1 Identification of the victims

For all victims, full first and last names are given, as well as their age. Most case descriptions concern one individual. Even when one case description concerns several victims, each of them is identified by means of their name and age. Occasionally, other identifying information is given, such as the victim's profession or political orientation. In all, the victims are described in ways that enable them to be identified clearly.

In (1) the reader is given information concerning the name, age and occupation of the victim. The victim's political affiliation ([2], [3]) and involvement in trade unions ([3]) may be mentioned as well. Thus, victims are identified unequivocally, while information about their political affiliation hints at the political factors involved in the human rights abuses reported. The Rettig report (Rettig report 1996: 1365–1366) states that, for the report as a whole, 2,272 out of 2,298 cases concern individuals with a mainly left-wing affiliation or no political affiliation. However, no further details are given regarding, for instance, individuals sympathizing with a party without actually being a member.

5 "testimonios de aquéllos que voluntariamente quisieron colaborar [...] la colaboración de todas estas personas y organismos [Vicaría de la Solidaridad]" Vicaría de la Solidaridad was an agency of the Chilean Catholic Church whose aim was to assist victims of the Pinochet dictatorship.

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(1) *El 15 de septiembre de 1973 muere* ***Guillermo INOSTROZA FLORES, 34 años, obrero***.
'On 15 September 1973, **Guillermo INOSTROZA FLORES, 34 years old, worker**, dies.'[6]

(2) *El 17 de septiembre de 1973, fueron detenidos frente a testigos, los hermanos:* ***Paulino Ernesto ORDENES SIMON, 21 años, campesino, militante del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) y Juan Miguel ORDENES SIMON, – campesino, 20 años***.
'On 17 September 1973, the [following] brothers were arrested in front of witnesses: **Paulino Ernesto ORDENES SIMÓN, 21 years old, farmer, militant of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), and Juan Miguel ORDENES SIMÓN, – farmer, 20 years old**.'

(3) *El 11 de septiembre de 1973 desaparece* ***Iván Octavio MIRANDA SEPULVEDA, 28 años, mecánico tornero, dirigente sindical***.
'On 11 September 1973, **Iván Octavio MIRANDA SEPULVEDA, 28 years old, lathe operator, trade union leader**, disappears.'

3.2 Identification of the perpetrators

No specific names are given for any of the perpetrators, which is in line with the legal framework that no individual responsibilities will be attributed. The vagueness or absence of an agent has been discussed in various studies, for instance as a means of diminishing the individual's own responsibility in psychotherapeutic contexts (Kurri and Wahlström. 2007), as a means of expressing genericity in Mexican constitutional texts on human rights (Vázquez Laslop and Díaz 2010), as a mitigation strategy when discussing taboo topics (Lavandera 1985; Crespo Fernández 2007: 45), or more generally as an ideologically motivated choice in different discourse types (see Fowler et al. 1979; Fowler 1991; Van Leeuwen 2008; and Billig 2008; for an overview). From a lexical point of view,

6 Although the report has been translated by the Center for Civil and Human Rights of the Notre Dame Law School, as authorized by the then president Aylwin, we preferred to provide our own translations since the official translations lack specifics, especially with regard to the translation of verbs representing death. We have offered translations that are true to the original register and style and have, as such, also maintained possible inconsistencies in the original (e.g. unexpected tense switches, truncated utterances, etc.). The translation by Notre Dame Law School is available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf (accessed 26 May 2017).

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the field of death and even more so violent death is typically marked by euphemisms, especially when killings organized by the State are concerned (Allan and Burridge 1991: 167). While most research in this vein has defined strategies for anonymity or vagueness mainly in terms of nominalization and/or agent elision, we showed in a previous article focusing specifically on the analysis of different levels of agency that a more fine-grained scale is needed for an adequate analysis of the variety of agent-defocusing strategies in some discourse types. We therefore proposed in an earlier study on this report to consider agentivity as:

> the reference to the perpetrator of human rights abuse, which is expressed through: (i) expressions that refer directly or indirectly to the perpetrator, (ii) the verb predicates that imply intentionality on behalf of the perpetrator [...], (iii) the syntactic structure that evokes the agent (periphrastic passive), and (iv) the participle that expresses the resultant state of the victim following the action committed by the perpetrator (*desaparecido* ['disappeared'], *fusilado* ['executed (by firearm)'], etc.). (De Cock and Maturana 2014: 126)

This typology complements the binary "agentialization – de-agentialization" distinction proposed by Van Leeuwen (1995: 96) in these terms, by taking into account a wider array of factors. This approach led us to a typology comprising five levels ranging from a prototypical agent to utterances where no agentivity at all is present. (i) The first level contains utterances with a prototypical agent as subject of a transitive verb, thus expressing full agentivity, intentionality and causality with respect to the violent death, e.g. *ejecutar* ('to execute'). (ii) The second level of agentivity consists of an agent complement of a periphrastic passive construction, where the agent does not appear as subject but as agent complement ([4]). The patient becomes grammatical subject, thus being more highlighted (Cuenca 2003: 3).

(4) *En el trayecto, el automóvil fue baleado* ***por una patrulla de la Fuerza Aérea y una de Carabineros***.
'During the journey, the car was shot at **by an Air Force patrol and by one of policemen**.'

In levels (iii) to (v), by contrast, the agent is "deleted" in Van Leeuwen's terms, yet different levels of reduced prominence may be distinguished. (iii) The third level consists of cases where the agent is not explicitly expressed but can be inferred from another expression in the utterance, e.g. through a temporal link with a previous action ([5]) or through a metonymic reference (Delbecque 2014: 266) (*en el Regimiento Arica* 'in the Arica regiment') ([6]). Van Leeuwen (2008: 42) already indicated that spatialization may background the role of participants. As pointed

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out by Delbecque, this kind of locative "[designates] a set of circumstances that naturally license the accomplishment of the action in continuity with the subject entity it supports" (Delbecque 2014: 283). While the verb phrase may still activate the notion of an agent, the fact that it is not mentioned as such reduces the agentivity of the representation without, however, annihilating it entirely (Delbecque 2014: 225).

(5) *El 16 de septiembre de l973 desapareció,* ***tras ser detenido*** *en su domicilio de la Población Roosevelt, Osvaldo Alfonso TORRES ALBORNOZ,24 años, comerciante*.
'On 16 September 1973, Osvaldo Alfonso TORRES ALBORNOZ, 24 years old, merchant, disappeared, **after being arrested** at his home in the Roosevelt shantytown.'

(6) *El 16 de octubre de 1973 quince personas que permanecían prisioneras en la Cárcel de La Serena fueron fusiladas* ***en el Regimiento Arica****, de esa ciudad*.
'On 16 October 1973, fifteen people who were held prisoner at La Serena jail were executed **in the Arica Regiment**, of that town.'

(iv) In the fourth level, the fact that an agent was involved can be inferred only from the frame evoked by the verb semantics (e.g. *ejecutar* 'to execute'). The passive is then used as an agent-defocusing structure (Shibatani 1985) and the utterance does not contain expressions which refer to the perpetrator (example [2]). Finally, (v) in the fifth level, the scene focuses only on the victim by using ergative verbs like *morir* 'to die' and *fallecer* 'to pass away'. The frame does not evoke an agent; only the discourse context allows us to infer that the death was violent and not merely the result of natural causes (examples [1] and [3]). When analyzing the data according to this typology, it becomes clear that, in many cases, a human agent is not mentioned (see De Cock and Maturana 2014 for a more detailed quantitative analysis). Indeed, of the utterances including a verb that expresses execution, detention, forced disappearance or death, the majority of the cases presented in Volume I of the report do not contain a prototypical agent, i.e. an agent that is human, performs an intentional action and is in subject or agent complement position (De Cock and Maturana 2014).

In addition to often being defocused or entirely absent, the perpetrators that are named in the Rettig report are described as an institutionalized collectivity, e.g. *Air Force patrol* (example [4]), which, in addition to their remaining anonymous, reduces their identifiability. Indeed, the named perpetrators always appear as a group and are systematically described in terms of their professional

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position, viz. a "collectivization" and "functionalization" in Van Leeuwen's (1996; Van Leeuwen 2008: 42) terms. When it is unknown to which section of the military or the security services the perpetrators belong, the report refers to the perpetrator by means of the more generic description *agents of the State* (Rettig report 1996: 25).

A further strategy of downgrading the individual agents involved is the attribution of deaths to "political violence". Through the formulation of a very abstract cause, namely violence in general, the Commission, on the one hand, attributes the violence not to individuals but at a more abstract level and, on the other hand, attributes it to society as a whole, not to certain sections of society.

4 Inclusion of sources in case descriptions

Our second research question concerns the inclusion of sources of information in the case descriptions, such as family, neighbors, other witnesses, surviving victims, perpetrators, newspapers, and the Instituto Médico Legal. We will focus on which sources appear explicitly in the case descriptions, whether they are presented as reliable and which aspects of the human rights violation they comment upon. We will then show that the sources influence the windowing of attention in the case descriptions. Given that the Rettig report only includes cases in which the victim died or disappeared, the victims cannot appear as a source of information (as opposed to the later Valech I report, for instance). As shown in the introduction, various sources were consulted by the Rettig Commission (Rettig report 1996: 2). However, in general, the source of information is rarely explicit, except for the Instituto Médico Legal and the press, which are often textually quoted. Many case descriptions mention *testimonies* without mentioning the source. In some cases, the Commission qualifies the credibility of the testimonies, e.g. *plausible testimonies* ([7]). The vagueness of source-naming may be partly due to the fact that testimonials could be given anonymously or by accomplices.

(7) *El 16 de septiembre de 1973 fue ejecutado*[7] *Vicente Patricio CLEMENT HECHENLEITNER, 27 años, empleado, dirigente del Cordón Industrial Vicuña Mackenna. El afectado había sido detenido el 14 del mismo mes por efectivos de la Fuerza Aérea, al llegar a la empresa LONCOLECHE.* ***Testimonios verosímiles*** *señalan que la víctima fue ejecutada por agentes*

7 Allan and Burridge (1991: 168) consider *execute* a euphemism since it literally means 'to perform'.

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del Estado el día 16 de septiembre, a orillas del zanjón de La Aguada, en Avda. Vicuña Mackenna con San Joaquín y su cuerpo abandonado allí.
'On 16 September 1973, Vicente Patricio CLEMENT HECHENLEITNER, 27 years old, employee, leader of the Cordón Industrial Vicuña Mackenna, was executed. The person concerned had been detained on the 14th of the same month by Air Force staff, upon his arrival at the LONCOLECHE company. **Plausible witnesses** point out that the victim was executed by agents of the State on September 16, on the edge of the La Aguada trench, at the crossing of Avda. Vicuña Mackenna with San Joaquín and his body was abandoned there.'

The victim could not be interrogated. As such, the only sources that may provide some insight into the victim's situation during the event are the victim's family and any surviving fellow prisoners. The family may offer information concerning the victim's whereabouts or the circumstances in which he/she was arrested ([8]), whereas fellow prisoners may have witnessed the killing ([9]).

(8) *El afectado era un activo militante y según su familia tenía estrecho contacto con Miguel Enríquez. Después de la detención* ***sus familiares*** *le buscan sin obtener resultados positivos.*
'The person concerned was an active militant and, according to his family, had close contact with Miguel Enríquez. After the arrest **his family members** search for him without success'

(9) *Esta Comisión rechaza la versión oficial por las siguientes razones:* [...] *y,* ***testimonios de otros detenidos que iban junto a los tres muertos****, señalaron que éstos fueron fusilados sin que mediara ataque previo.*
'This Commission rejects the official version for the following reasons: [...] and **the testimonies of the other prisoners that were with the three dead people**, they pointed out that they [the deceased] were executed without there being a previous attack.'

An interesting case is the mention of eyewitnesses in the report ([10]). This term (*testigos presenciales*) appears 25 times in the first volume, which contains in all 275 references to witnesses. The identity of these witnesses, however, is not revealed: they may have been surviving detainees, but the use of the term *testigos presenciales* may also be a way of referring to information obtained from the perpetrators, without mentioning their role in the torture or killing.

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(10) *En la noche fue trasladado hasta el El Regimiento Blindado Nº2. El día 13 de Septiembre en la mañana, junto con otros detenidos fue enviado al Estadio Chile, donde sufrió múltiples torturas y vejaciones aplicadas por personal del Ejército, como lo declaran* ***testigos presenciales*** *de los hechos. Allí permanece hasta el día 15 de Septiembre.*
'During the night he was transported to armored regiment no. 2. On the morning of September 13, he was sent together with other detainees to the Estadio Chile, where he suffered various tortures and abuses administered by army staff, as declared by **eyewitnesses** to the facts. He stays there until September 15.'

In some cases, people actually witness the death of a victim, as in (11). Many violent deaths were not witnessed, since many torture centers were clandestine, which allowed the institutional agents to deny their involvement and to present the deaths as having occurred in violent encounters between the army and opposition groups. Such clandestine centers (e.g. Londres 38, Nido 20) are nowadays considered "countermonuments" (Lazarra 2011). The bodies of these victims were often left in public places, such as the Mapocho River. Both public killings and the practice of abandoning bodies in public places contributed to creating a climate of terror and, as such, to discouraging opposition.

(11) *El 12 de septiembre de 1973 fue muerto Arturo Ramón SAN MARTIN SUTHERLAND, 36 años, fotógrafo, directivo en la Editorial Quimantú, militante socialista. El afectado, que salió el día 11 de septiembre a tomar fotografías en el centro de Santiago, fue herido por disparos de bala mientras lo hacía,* ***según fue observado por testigos****.*
'On 12 September 1973, Arturo Ramón SAN MARTÍN SUTHERLAND, 36 years old, photographer, director at the Quimantú publishing house, socialist militant, was killed. The individual concerned, who left on September 11th to take photographs in the center of Santiago, was injured by bullet shots while doing so, **as was observed by witnesses**.'

Another non-official source that is regularly present is the neighbors. Their role was either that of mere witness or of informer. Indeed, in some cases the neighbors bear witness to how a person is arrested or killed in a public place, in which case they seem to indirectly support the victim. In other cases, it was the neighbors who contacted the police or military forces to denounce someone, in which case they do not support the victim (12).

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(12) *Los **testimonios recogidos** por esta Comisión señalan que fue detenido por una patrulla militar, a fines del mes de Septiembre en su domicilio, a raíz de la denuncia de **vecinos**, cuando el afectado, en estado de ebriedad, agredía a su hermana. Posteriormente su cuerpo es encontrado en el Río Mapocho, con heridas a bala en el tórax*.
'The **testimonies collected** by this Commission show that he was detained at his home by a military patrol at the end of the month of September, based on a complaint made by **neighbors**, when the individual concerned, in a state of inebriation, attacked his sister. His corpse is later found in the Mapocho River, with bullet wounds in the chest.'

The denunciation may be motivated by both political and non-political reasons. In (13), the victim is denunciated for a "suspicious attitude", leading to the person's detention and subsequent death, while in (12), the neighbors contact the police on non-political grounds. Yet the latter case, the killing of an alleged criminal without any kind of trial, is also a form of human rights violation, albeit seemingly one without direct political motivation.

(13) *El 21 de octubre de 1973 fallece Gerardo POBLETE FERNANDEZ, 31 años, sacerdote salesiano, profesor de Filosofía del Colegio de la Orden en Iquique*. [...] *publicó en la edición de 25 de octubre de 1973, del periódico "El Tarapacá", la siguiente información: "El domingo 21 de octubre de 1973 a las 17:20 horas y ante una denuncia de que existía gente **en actitud sospechosa** en la parte alta del Colegio Don Bosco, carabineros procedió a revisar el lugar haciendo a su vez un allanamiento del recinto. En el registro se encontró en el dormitorio del padre Poblete, numerosa literatura marxista, armas contundentes y alguna munición motivo por el cual se llevó detenidos a Gerardo Poblete Fernández, sacerdote y a Ricardo Francisco Salgado Torres, empleado, ambos profesores de ese colegio."*
'On 21 October 1973, Gerardo POBLETE FERNANDEZ, 31 years old, Salesian priest, philosophy professor at the Public School of the Order in Iquique, dies. [...] published in the 25 October 1973 edition of the newspaper "El Tarapacá", the following information: "On Sunday 21 October 1973 at 5.20 pm and in response to a complaint that there were people **with a suspicious attitude** in the upper part of the Don Bosco College, police proceeded to check the place, at the same time searching the premises. During their search, a lot of Marxist literature was found in the dorm of Father Poblete, as well as blunt weapons and some ammunition, for which reason Gerardo Poblete Fernández, priest, and Ricardo Francisco Salgado Torres, employee, both teachers at this college, were detained."'

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In line with the non-attribution of responsibility, the perpetrators are never explicitly represented as a source in the case descriptions. However, it is pointed out in the introduction to the report that the Commission obtained information from perpetrators and thus, supposedly, information given by perpetrators was included in the report in a more implicit way (Rettig report 1996: 5). While the Commission did not make this information explicitly public, some perpetrators involved did come forward in the media at a later stage.

A further source that is sometimes included and commented upon in the report is the press. Interestingly, newspapers occupy a rather ambiguous position in the report. The introduction clearly stipulates that censorship was in place during the period in question (Rettig report 1996: 35). Indeed, the information available in the media could be considered to support the victim's position or to offer information on the regime's repression ([14]); in most cases, the newspapers are actually represented as transmitting the "official" version of the military regime. Thus, in (15), the report stipulates that the official version was transmitted via the press, clearly showing that the newspapers were controlled by the regime. Moreover, the Commission explicitly claims that the version is not plausible.

(14) *En los días siguientes, se comienzan a realizar allanamientos en diversas zonas poblacionales de la Región, que culminan con masivas detenciones de personas, algunas de las cuales posteriormente mueren o desaparecen.* [...] *La masividad de estos operativos, se encuentra acreditada* ***por la información entregada en la prensa de la época****, a través de múltiples testimonios que esta Comisión conoció, y por los propios informes de las Fuerzas Armadas*.
'In the days that follow, searches are beginning to be carried out in various residential areas of the region, which culminate in wholesale detentions of individuals, some of whom later die or disappear. [...] The massive extension of those operations is confirmed **by the information given in the press at the time**, through various testimonies that this Commission took knowledge of, and through the armed forces' own reports.'

(15) ***La versión oficial*** *en relación a la suerte de estas seis personas,* ***según se publicó en los diarios el día 2 de Octubre de 1973****, es que en el momento del allanamiento las fuerzas militares, habían sido atacadas por un grupo de extremistas, que fueron capturados. Señala además el informe de prensa que "Todos ellos fueron ajusticiados en el mismo campamento." No resulta verosímil* ***la versión oficial entregada a través de la prensa****, por cuanto*

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no hay indicios que hagan suponer la existencia del "ataque de extremistas"; porque en el evento que así hubiese sido, no parece necesario dar muerte a los pobladores que eran arrestados.
'**The official version** related to the fate of these six people, **as published in the newspapers on 2 October 1973**, is that at the time of the raid, the military forces had been attacked by a group of extremists, who were captured. The press report moreover stipulates that "All of them were executed in the same camp." **The official version transmitted via the press** does not turn out to be plausible, in so far as there is no evidence to suggest the existence of "attacks by extremists", because if this had been the case, it does not seem necessary to kill the people that were detained.'

Finally, the report refers to two official bodies, namely the Instituto Médico Legal, and the Commission itself. The Instituto Médico Legal issues death certificates specifying the cause of death ([16]). The information, often written in an administrative style using specialized medical terminology, is crucial since it originates from an official, State-linked institution that scientifically states the cause of death. This postmortem information is never contested in the report.[8]

(16) [...] *hasta que se les informa en **el Instituto Médico Legal** que la víctima se encontraba sepultada en el patio 29 del Cementerio General. El protocolo de autopsia señala que la causa de la muerte fueron "múltiples heridas a bala" y la data, la misma de la detención.*
'[...] until at the **Instituto Médico Legal** they are informed that the victim is buried in patio 29 of the General Cemetery. The protocol of the postmortem stipulates that the cause of death was "multiple bullet wounds" and the date, the same as the detention.'

Last but not least, the Commission itself is clearly present in the conclusion of many case descriptions. While the Commission's position at this point often appears in a rather formulaic way, it clearly shows an epistemic appreciation of the situation. The Commission relies on information available from various sources in the absence of traces of the victim. In some cases, e.g. (14), the Commission even explicitly rejects the official version before presenting its own conclusions.

8 This does not imply that these results may not have been contested elsewhere.

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(17) *La Comisión ha **desestimado la versión oficial** entregada por el Gobierno de Chile, especialmente por las siguientes razones: Las dos versiones transcritas, sumario del Ejército y respuesta oficial del Gobierno resultan contradictorias. Es imposible pensar que estas personas se concertaran para fugarse, puesto que no existía ninguna vinculación entre ellas, salvo la de vivir en el mismo edificio.*
'The Commission has **dismissed the official version** given by the Chilean Government, particularly for the following reasons: The two transcribed versions, the summary of the army and the official version of the government, turn out to be contradictory. It's impossible to think that these people colluded to escape, since no link exists between them, except for the fact that they live in the same building.'

In case of rebuttal by the Commission, the violent death may be initially evoked by means of an event representation with a lower degree of agentivity (e.g. *died*), while by the end of the case description, the Commission may qualify the death as an execution, based on the sources consulted. One and the same event can thus be represented with varying degrees of agentivity, reflecting the Commission's deliberative process.

Although the introduction to the report clearly indicates that the Commission also used information from human rights organizations such as Vicaría de la Solidaridad, these organizations are never mentioned in specific case descriptions. It is noteworthy that Vicaría was the major organization providing legal support to the relatives of persecuted and missing people and, as such, had a lot of information.

In summary, the combination of information sources is represented schematically in chronological order in Figure 1, differentiating between information prior to the human rights violation, information concerning the violation itself, and information obtained postmortem. Adding up these sources, it becomes clear that there is a gap at the crucial juncture, namely the human rights violation itself. Obviously, no information comes from the deceased victim. The perpetrators, for their part, are kept out of the case descriptions due to the so-called "pact of silence" in Chile. In Lamb's (2013: 352–353) terms, both parties are to be considered as dehumanized in the sense that, in the report, both are "spoken about" rather than "speaking," and their thoughts or feelings are not articulated at all. Thus, information on this crucial moment comes from third parties, namely witnesses (anonymous or otherwise) or the press (not always reliable).

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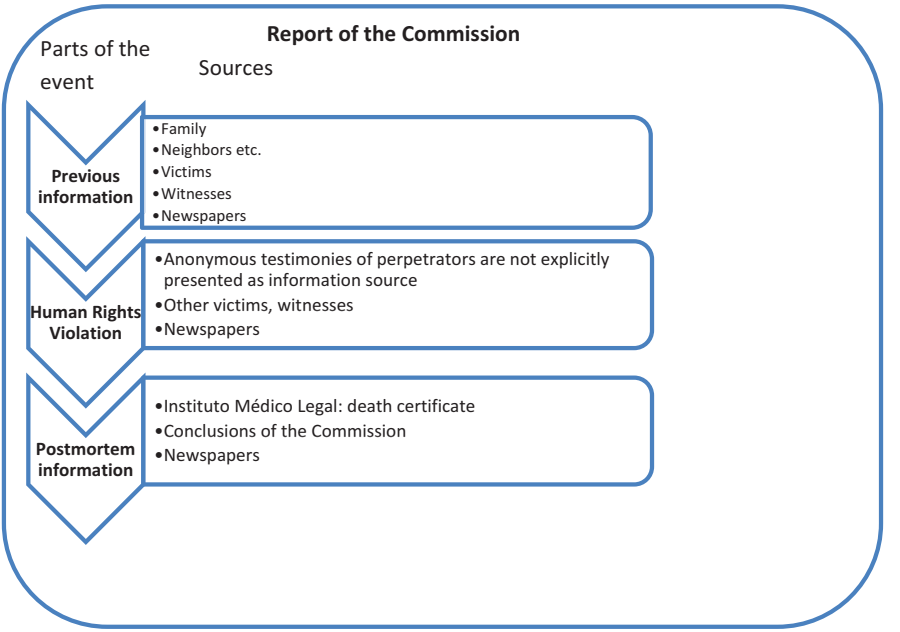


Figure 1: Schematic representation of the sources in the successive parts of the event description.

5 Discussion

As we have shown in Sections 1 and 2, the Rettig report is a very specific type of linguistic production that originated in a particular early period of a post-dictatorial transition in Chile. We have analyzed in Sections 3 and 4 how the victims and perpetrators are identified and how the participants in the event, including information sources, are represented. In this section, we will discuss what political implications might be imputed to the discursive choices made in the report.

Upon publication of the report, responses varied widely (see Márquez and Teresa 2001 for an overview of different reactions in Chilean newspapers according to their sociopolitical orientation). As shown in Oteíza's (2009; Oteíza 2010) analysis of the introduction and political framework of the report, responsibility is attributed to society as a whole: "All Chileans are represented as responsible for the repressive and extremist violence. Society as a whole is represented as

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responsible" (Oteíza 2010: 166).[9] This idea of shared responsibility is one of the major criticisms of the Rettig report.

In addition to representing responsibility as being shared, no individual responsibilities are attributed. While victims are identified with great detail, perpetrators are not identified at all or only as part of a large group, such as soldiers, agents, etc. Moreover, the perpetrators are often not presented as the agents of the action, which again downplays their responsibility. Furthermore, the perpetrators are not explicitly represented as a source of information in the case descriptions, which results in a lack of information concerning the most crucial part of the human rights violation, namely the killing or forced disappearance. Given the gaps in the case description, especially regarding the perpetrators, it is understandable that some concerned parties (mainly organizations of the victims' families) consider that the Commission did not fulfill its aim of "establishing a framework that is as complete as possible concerning the serious facts of human rights violation, its antecedents and circumstances" (Rettig report 1996: xix).

We can then see that various strategies interact in the non-attribution of individual responsibilities.

The mention in various case descriptions of a very abstract cause, namely the nominalization of *political violence*, furthermore testifies to the desire to not attribute individual responsibilities and to represent the violence as a feature of society of the time, not of specific sections of society, e.g. "the events of serious human rights violations and political violence that characterized our coexistence" (Rettig report 1996: XI–XII).[10]

The discursive choices made in the Rettig report also have repercussions on the ongoing process of society coming to terms with the memory of the dictatorship. Indeed, the discourse on shared responsibility in the Rettig report has set out the framework for an official discourse that is also present in later discourses and in commemorative projects such as the creation of the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago de Chile (Lazarra 2011). The discourses on shared responsibility and reconciliation are currently the subject of much debate.

9 "Todos los chilenos son representados como responsables por la violencia represiva y extremista. La sociedad como un todo es representada como responsable" (Oteíza 2010: 166).
10 "los acontecimientos de graves violaciones de derechos humanos y de la violencia política que caracterizaron nuestra convivencia" (Rettig report 1996: XI–XII).

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6 Conclusions

This analysis of the representation of victims and perpetrators in the Rettig report has shown that there is a strong contrast between the precise identification of the victim and the almost absolute anonymity of the perpetrator. Various strategies contribute to downsizing the latter's identity, such as non-agentive constructions and indirect references, which loosen the link between the perpetrators and the action.

Various sources are presented in the case descriptions, with the exception of the perpetrators. While it is clear from the introduction to the report and subsequent press statements that some perpetrators testified to the Commission, they are never explicitly represented as a source of information in the case descriptions. Yet, given the victim's death or disappearance, the perpetrator is the only person that might provide information about the most crucial moment. The fact that the perpetrator is never explicitly represented as a source of information goes against the aim to be as informative as possible, but is in line with the non-attribution of responsibility. We may therefore conclude that, both as a result of the anonymization of the perpetrators and the information gap concerning the death or forced disappearance of the victim, the non-attribution of responsibility took precedence over completeness of information at the time of writing the report, which goes against the concept of the Right to Memory. In that sense, while the Rettig report fulfills its aim of non-attribution of responsibility, sections of public opinion, and especially organizations of the victims' families, have pointed out that it does not comply with the aim of completeness of information. As part of the collective process of coming to terms with the past, as we hope to have shown, it is important to take into account not only the goals that are formulated by commissions or other bodies, but also the way in which collective memory is represented, at both utterance and discourse level.

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