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WHY THEY DON'T TRUST US

Chilean mainstream media, metajournalistic discourses and repairing journalism

PHILLIP DURÁN PASTENE

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ABSTRACT

Although it is a global phenomenon, the decline in media trust has been particularly deep in Chile: in 2020 the country registered the second largest drop in trust in the world, after strong social protests and episodes of street violence in 2019. In contrast to audiences' criticisms of the media, it was not publicly known how journalists explained this crisis.

This dissertation aims to understand how do mainstream media journalists in Chile explain the crisis in media trust and how has this crisis impacted in Chilean journalism.

To address this, I propose an alternative conceptual framework, drawing upon journalistic and media studies and a discursive institutionalist approach, in which media trust is considered as a discursive construction, shaped by the discourses of different social actors, moving away from the traditional concept of a relationship between trustor and trustee. These narratives are understood as meta-journalistic discourses, which address both the crisis in media trust and the practices and values of journalism.

My analysis is based on the results of nine in-depth interviews with editors of Chilean mainstream media, interpreted using a reflexive thematic analysis approach. The results suggest a gap between the narratives of audiences and journalists. Despite journalists acknowledging various mistakes of their own, they argue that they are not the only ones to blame for the decline in media trust, pointing to the context of political polarisation and social media and accusing audiences of 'unfair' evaluations. This implies that media trust is currently a space of discursive dispute. Moreover, the crisis in media trust has triggered a process of repairing the journalistic paradigm, incorporating new practices to correct admitted errors, taking a distance from the elite and trying to bring the media closer to citizens, but at the same time safeguarding traditional journalistic values such as 'impartiality'. This process of reparation opens up spaces for new tensions and contradictions within the journalistic paradigm and suggests lines for further research on its relationship with journalistic authority, political polarisation and distrust from journalists to audiences.

INTRODUCTION

Media trust has deteriorated over the last decade. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, it declined in 16 out of 27 countries and increased in only 6, while 42% say media fuels the cycle of distrust (Edelman, 2023). Meanwhile, the Digital News Report states that the rise in media trust during the Coronavirus pandemic was seen 'like a short-term rally rather than any kind of longer-term renaissance', a backdrop that has led to lower average media trust figures overall than in 2015 (Newman *et al*., 2022: 15).

In Chile, media trust registered a drop of 15 points in 2020, the second highest worldwide that year (Newman *et al*., 2020). The backdrop to this was the so-called social outburst of October 2019, the massive protests against the government, social inequality and institutions in general, all of which was marked by several episodes of street violence and human rights violations alleged against the police (AFP, 2019; Mayol, 2019; Montes, 2019; Peña 2020). In this context, more than 80% stated that journalists did not cover important events or interview the right people, while 71% felt that journalists generally presented only one side of the story (Grassau *et al*., 2020). Public criticism of mainstream media pointed to biases in coverage (Aldana, 2019; Bustos, 2019; Salinas and Cabalin, 2019).

As a Chilean journalist, I have an important concern about media trust. I was a reporter and political editor on mainstream newspapers and in TV stations between 2005 and 2017. About a month after the social outburst, in November 2019, I returned to the role of political editor in a TV station, a position I held until September 2022. The crisis in media trust was a regular conversation topic among journalists. But beyond these informal dialogues, my question was how has this crisis impacted on Chilean mainstream media? Was it a shared, cross-cutting impact? Audience criticisms were widely known, but what was happening on the mainstream media side?

One way to find this out would have been to analyse media content, but that would not have allowed us to know the reasons why it is done in a certain way and not in another. Thus, what is relevant is to know what journalists have to say about this crisis, that is, their discourses.

This is especially the case considering there is a research gap in which journalistic narratives about media trust have been neglected, focusing attention on the discourses of audiences.

In this research I interviewed nine mainstream media editors in Chile. Editors are key positions in media outlets, usually responsible for framing stories, deciding which stories will or will not be published, while experiencing pressure and influence from external actors and translating them into internal decisions (Allan, 2010; Entman, 2007; Hanitzsch *et al*. 2019; Sjøvaag 2013).

One of the central aspects of this dissertation is the proposal of an alternative conceptual framework to address media trust as a discursive construct, drawing upon journalistic and media studies and a discursive institutionalist approach. The narratives that shape media trust are understood as meta-journalistic discourses, which address both the crisis of trust in the media and the practices and values of journalism. The latter distances itself from the traditional approach to researching media trust, which aims to identify influences on trustor and trustee, in a way that often lacks a relational emphasis between the different actors and elements at play (Curini *et al*., 2023). In this sense, the proposed framework aims to a broader and more complex understanding of media trust.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Literature review has been organized into four parts, namely, Media trust and influences, Meta-journalistic discourses and media trust, Boundaries and paradigms, and Chilean mainstream media and media trust.

Media trust and influences

Trust has been studied in different social science disciplines (Tsfati and Cappella, 2003). Rotter defines it as 'an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon' (1967: 651). In media and journalism studies, there is no single definition or complete agreement on how to measure it (Engelke *et al*., 2019; Fisher, 2016). However, one of the most widely accepted concepts points to a relationship between two parties, a trustor and a trustee (Curini *et al*., 2023; Engelke

et al., 2019; Osburg & Heinecke, 2019; Strömbäck *et al*., 2020; Toff *et al*., 2020; Tsfati, 2004; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Usher, 2019). This relationship is based on the expectations of the trustor towards the trustee, by allowing the trustee to access knowledge beyond his or her reach (Bruckner, cited in Osburg and Heinecke, 2019).

Research on media trust has been channelled into two main perspectives: one that explains media trust in terms of reasons that are endogenous to media, and one that focuses on aspects exogenous to media, in which there is a consideration of the social and cultural contexts of the audiences (Usher, 2018; Curini *et al*., 2023).

In the perspective that focuses on elements endogenous to media, one of the relevant phenomena investigated has been bias. This can be the product of processes intrinsic to journalism, such as framing, understood as 'culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation' (Entman, 2007: 164). For Entman (2007), bias can be identified both in terms of patterns in content (content bias) and in terms of the motivations and mindsets of journalists (decision-making bias). Thus, it can occur consciously or unconsciously. In this 'endogenous' line, moreover, research has also pointed to how the structure of media ownership has effects on the production of biased content (Kuklinski and Sigelman, 1992; Gilens and Hertzman, 2000; Bailard, 2016; Baker, 2006); how media violation of journalistic and ethical standards affects media trust (Fisher, 2016); differences in media trust according to different types of media, such as TV, newspapers and online news (Kiousis, 2001) or according to different classifications of news, namely, news overall, news that people use, or news in digital and social media (Newman *et al*., 2019).

On the other hand, in the perspective on exogenous elements, research has pointed to the personal experience of audiences, regarding events they witnessed personally (Livio and Cohen, 2018; Nelson and Lewis, 2021); their ideological position (Curini *et al*., 2023); and the relationship between media trust and media use, with evidence on the fact that the lower the trust, the lower the media use (Abreu and de Zuniga, 2017; Ladd, 2012; Strömbäck *et al*., 2020; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003, 2005).

In addition to that, in this 'exogenous' perspective there are two lines of research that have deepened in recent years. On the one hand, the influence on media trust of growing political polarisation: the preference of audiences towards attitude-consistent information (Flynn *et al*., 2017); how the growing presence of 'fake news' has weakened media trust (Egelhofer and Lecheler, 2019); how media skepticism is associated with less mainstream news exposure but more non-mainstream news exposure (Tsfati and Cappella, 2003); and the 'trust nexus', namely, trust in news media is linked to trust in political institutions (Hanitzsch *et al*., 2018). On the other hand, the influence of the increasing digitalization of the media landscape: how the new high-choice media environment and audience fragmentation have weakened traditional media (Van Aelst *et al*., 2017); how the use of social media for news is closely linked to the increase in news mistrust (Park *et al*., 2020); and the presence of filter bubbles and echo chambers (segregation of content according to audience characteristics), although there is also evidence that these may reflect preexisting political divisions in the audience (Ross Arguedas *et al*., 2022).

Against this backdrop, Curini et al. suggest the need for a more relational approach, reconciling both perspectives, arguing that media trust involves both endogenous and exogenous aspects: 'perceptions are due to both actual journalistic performances and ideological considerations' (2023: 4). This idea of a relational approach to media trust is relevant and will be further developed below, based on a different proposed media trust concept.

Metajournalistic discourses and media trust

The research outlined above aims to identify the elements that influence media trust. However, from a constructivist perspective, social phenomena - such as media trust - are shaped by the 'meaning-making activities' of social actors (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018: 113).

This underpins a discursive institutionalist approach, in which institutions are understood as a set of rules and practices that give them shape and legitimacy. In this view, journalism is an institution 'in the sense that it entails social patterns of behavior identifiable across organizations that extend over space and endure over time, and that preside over a societal and/or political sector' (Cook, cited in Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). Because institutional

practices have meaning and sense, they are also expressed through discourses. Thus, discourses constitute identity-forming spaces for institutions, making explicit both acceptable practices and values as well as those outside their boundaries (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017; Lewis, 2012; Vos and Thomas, 2018). Seen as an institution, the news media is 'an ordered aggregate of shared norms and informal rules that guide news collection' (Sparrow, 2006: 155).

A relevant concept researched within this perspective has been journalistic authority, 'the central element that makes journalism work' (Carlson, 2017: 5). For Carlson, it is 'a contingent relationship in which certain actors come to possess a right to create legitimate discursive knowledge about events in the world for others' (2017: 13). Carlson posits that journalistic authority is not a static or intrinsic characteristic possessed by an institution, but on the contrary, that it has a discursive essence that is permanently constructed, reconstructed and challenged on the basis of 'journalistic practices, news forms, underlying technologies, organisational structures, and the wider context in which news is produced and consumed' (2017: 5). In other words, journalistic authority emerges as a discourse from 'interaction between stakeholders, such as journalists, audiences, sources, and critics and is affected by contingencies both internal and external to journalism' (Vos and Thomas, 2018: 2001).

These discourses from different actors are metajournalistic discourses, that is, 'public expressions evaluating news texts, the practices that produce them, or the conditions of their reception' (Carlson, 2016: 350). These discourses operate on two levels: on the one hand, they address journalistic practices, its products and specific conditions, but at the same time, they have a normative dimension about what journalism is and should be like (Carlson, 2016, 2017; Ross Arguedas *et al*., 2022; Vos and Thomas, 2018).

How does this relate to media trust? Media trust is indispensable for building journalistic authority (Carlson, 2017; Koivunen and Vuorelma, 2022; Vos and Thomas, 2018). Acknowledging that both of them are different concepts - media trust based on the will to believe and authority on the 'power to compel belief'- Usher argues that they are deeply related: 'journalists' claim to provide trustworthy accounting of events in the world better than anyone else also has to be considered from the perspective of whether anyone actually trusts them' (2018: 568).

Despite the above, scarce research attention has been given to understanding how this relationship between media trust and journalistic authority works.

Considering that journalistic authority and media trust operate at a similar structural-level where different social actors interact, it can be argued that media trust is also a discursive product, built from the interaction of metajournalistic discourses. Journalists, audiences, politicians, academics or experts, advertisers, and digital platforms, interact in this space, leading us to see media trust as a contingent discourse or narrative.

This discursive perspective means diverging from the generally accepted concept of media trust as a relationship between two parties, trustor and trustee. In fact, both approaches have different assumptions and consequences. On the one hand, the research outlined in the first part of this literature review aims to identify influences on trustor and trustee, in a way that -according to Curini *et al.* (2023)- often lacks a relational emphasis between the different actors and elements at stake. In contrast, the main strength of the discursive institutionalist approach is its relational character, since the actors' own discourses are constructed on the basis of making sense, at the same time, of other actors' discourses. Additionally, the fundamental difference is that these discourses impact on media trust irrespective of whether that narrative is not supported by research evidence. For example, the fact that, in their narratives, journalists dismiss criticism from audiences due to biased content does not necessarily imply that such bias does not exist. In fact, such a narrative has an impact on media trust, to the extent that it justifies journalistic practices and standards for content production: journalists will probably not make efforts to correct biases they do not admit, even if they do exist. This journalistic content will be, in turn, evaluated (also discursively) by audiences.

Consequently, this dissertation propose to understand media trust as a narrative in constant construction and reconstruction, based on interactions between different actors and phenomena - including trustor and trustee, but not only them – regarding expectations of media performance.

Boundaries and paradigms

To analyse metajournalistic discourses, Carlson (2016) identifies three interpretive processes: definition making, boundary setting, and legitimisation.

Definition making points to the concepts and symbols shared by the actors, such as a journalistic practice or content attributes. Boundary setting implies the demarcation of the spaces to which such practices, concepts or symbols belong, and thus involves differentiating between practices inside and outside journalism. On the basis of definition making and boundary setting, the third interpretative process arises: legitimisation of actors, forms and norms.

From the sociology of professions, there is extensive research on boundary work. Considering that these boundaries are constantly being challenged and transformed, 'boundary work is a rhetorical exercise' (Lewis, 2012: 842). While setting boundaries to define what journalism is, actors define their own values and practices, which have been called an occupational ideology or a distinct paradigm (Lewis, 2012; Vos and Moore, 2020).

Paradigm-building activities are relevant to our research because they provide us with tools to analyse metajournalistic discourses. Vos and Moore (2020) distinguish five types, which have occurred throughout the history of journalism. First, paradigm experimentation, when journalists explicitly posed terms that ultimately did not achieve sufficient discursive legitimacy to become part of the paradigm. Second, paradigm inception, when those proposed practices or norms were well received and gained legitimacy, becoming principles. Third, paradigm formalisation, insofar as the elements that make up the paradigm are explicitly articulated, for example through codes, publications, or university lectures. Fourth, paradigm normalisation, the stage at which the former formalised paradigm acquires hegemonic status. And finally, paradigm reconsideration, in which the journalistic paradigm is challenged in its main elements, in a counter-hegemonic way.

There is a consensus that a central element of the journalistic paradigm is the concept of objectivity (Vos and Moore, 2020; Lewis, 2012). Faced with criticism from various actors, journalists have incorporated new practices and standards, safeguarding the concept of

objectivity, in a process which is understood as paradigm repair. However, in recent years there has been criticism of the concept itself, advocating a journalism marked more by opinion, the fragmentation of audiences and the emergence of partisan media. While this does not in itself constitute the end of the journalistic paradigm of objectivity, it is a feature of paradigm reconsideration (Hindman and Thomas, 2013; Vos and Moore, 2020).

Chilean mainstream media and media trust

Considering the discursive institutionalist approach, it is important for this research to outline metajournalistic discourses about media trust in Chile. Two actors have been salient in this regard: audiences and scholars or experts. It is relevant to note that so far there are no public discourses or narratives from mainstream media journalists addressing media trust.

Media trust in Chile registered 30% in 2020, its lowest level ever, after a drop of 15 points compared to 2019. This was the second largest drop in the world in 2020 and the largest in Latin America (Newman *et al*., 2020). Although in the following years the figures rose, in 2023 there was a further drop of 3 points, with the total reaching 35% (Newman *et al*, 2023).

This crisis in media trust has been linked to the social and political context in Chile, marked by the so-called social outburst of October 2019, with massive demonstrations against inequalities, the right-wing government and institutions in general, including episodes of violence and human rights violations, a scenario whose causes have been interpreted as a critical assessment of the free market model (Mayol, 2019; Montes, 2019; Peña 2020). The high levels of social and political tension began to subside in part after a political agreement on the drafting of a new constitution (Senado de Chile, 2019). According to Newman et al. (2020: 92), 'in a country with the most concentrated media ownership in Latin America, journalists are seen as part of an unrepresentative political class and there is resentment on the streets about news coverage on TV and in the press'. In the years following the social outburst, the increase in media trust figures has been linked to the media's role in the Covid-19 pandemic and to what has been described as 'a new political scenario in the country following the rejection of the draft for a new constitution' (Newman *et al*., 2023). The latter, in reference to what others have called a 'political pendulum', meant that after the social outburst in 2019, Chileans went from electing a left-wing majority in the 2020 elections to draft a constitutional proposal, to

rejecting such a text in a referendum in 2022 and electing in 2023 a right-wing majority that will have to work on a second constitutional text (AFP, 2023; Cavallo, 2023; Nicas, 2022; Molina 2022).

In the period following the social outburst, much of the public debate was marked by criticism of mainstream media. 'Turn off the TV' or 'the press lies' became popular phrases on graffiti and social media, along with analyses of how in recent years the media did not reflect the 'frustrated aspirations of two generations' (Herrscher, 2019; Nalvarte, 2020). Criticism also posited that media coverage of the social outburst privileged acts of violence over the social causes of the protests, accusing it of 'disinformation' and bias, especially on TV (Aldana, 2019; Bustos, 2019; Salinas and Cabalin, 2019). These analyses were given prominent coverage in alternative digital media, which increased their number of clicks (Luna *et al*., 2021; Nalvarte, 2020; Ramírez and Matus, 2022). For most audiences, journalists did not cover important issues fairly and did not provide balanced coverage, so the news they delivered was not 'trustworthy' (Grassau *et al*., 2020). In addition, over 80% said the media was under undue political and business influence (Newman *et al*., 2022).

Audience criticisms were aligned with some of the academic research of previous years. One of the relevant points is the high homogeneity of the thematic agenda presented by the media, along with a strong dependence on official sources to the detriment of citizen sources (Díaz and Mellado, 2017; Gronemeyer *et al*., 2021). Moreover, the media's thematic agenda did not reflect the issues relevant to citizens (Valenzuela, 2009). Poverty, for example, had a reduced presence on TV news (Etchegaray and Matus, 2015).

Beyond homogeneity, it has also been pointed out that the watchdog role has been performed significantly less, regarding political coverage, in Chile than in the U.S. (Hellmueller and Mellado, 2016). As well as this, the presence of sensationalism in media coverage has been noted, as, for instance, in TV reports on the effects of the 2010 earthquake and tsunami (Puente *et al*., 2013).

However, Gronemeyer and Porath (2015) point out that in Chilean newspapers there is no intra-media homogeneity, i.e., articles consider sources with different opinions, including

those contrary to those expressed by the same newspaper in its editorials. In addition to that, regarding the presence of bias, Navia and Osorio (2015) posit that the statement that El Mercurio and La Tercera -the two main newspapers in Chile- 'are right-wing is a simplification', since El Mercurio 'shows a rather positive bias in its coverage' of the different presidents of Chile from 1994 onwards, despite the fact that three of them are left-wing. Ramírez and Matus (2022), meanwhile, diverge from the idea of editorial control of the media by external forces, suggesting a 'media distrust framing', a cultural phenomenon that would explain distrust towards the media.

Another relevant issue in media criticism points to the concentration of media ownership (Díaz and Mellado, 2017; Gronemeyer *et al*., 2021; Newman *et al*., 2020; Valenzuela, 2009). Sunkel and Geoffroy (2011: 146) say there is an 'ideological monopoly' in favour of neo-liberal and conservative positions.

In the case of newspapers, the two main ones, El Mercurio and La Tercera, are seen as a duopoly with links to the political right and with a decisive impact on shaping the public agenda. In the case of El Mercurio, research has mainly pointed to its support for the 1973 coup d'état and the Pinochet dictatorship; in the case of La Tercera, to the financial bailout it received in 1982 from the military regime (Correa Sutil, 2005; Monckeberg, 2009; Navia and Osorio, 2015; Sunkel and Geoffroy, 2011).

In the case of TV, the prominent feature regarding its ownership is the presence of large business consortiums (Guerra, 2019; Sunkel and Geoffroy, 2011). This is the case with Mega, owned by Bethia Group, with investments also in retail, real estate, horse racing and football, among others (Bethia Group, n.d.), and Canal 13, owned by Andrónico Luksic. The Luksic business consortium is chaired by the family's matriarch, Iris Fontbona, holder of the largest fortune in Chile, according to Forbes (Arenas, 2023; Carrizo and Marconi, 2022). Chilevisión, meanwhile, is a TV station controlled by the American group ViacomCBS, which owns Paramount Pictures studios and several tv stations and streaming services (Paramount, n.d.). Until 2010, Chilevisión was owned by former Chilean President Sebastián Piñera (Tapia, 2021), who also appears on Forbes' list of Chile's richest people (Arenas, 2023).

The other relevant player is TVN, a public TV station, but which, according to Chilean law, must be managed autonomously and self-financed through advertising. The role of the Chilean state is expressed in the nomination of the board of directors, a process which involves the President of the Republic and the Senate (TVN, n.d.). However, in 2016 Congress approved a capital injection of US$70 million, amidst a complex financial scenario for TVN (La Tercera, 2016).

In the case of radio, it has undergone the arrival of foreign business consortiums (Guerra, 2019). The group with the largest presence is Iberoamericana Radio Chile, with 11 national stations, owned by the Spanish group Prisa, which is present in 23 countries and owns the newspaper El País (Iarc; n.d.; Observatorio de datos, 2021; Prisa, n.d.). The Bethia Group, controller of the Mega TV station, also has 4 national radio stations, while Canal 13 owns 4 national radio stations as well. The news radio stations are Biobío and Cooperativa, also with a national scope, and controlled by Chilean companies (Observatorio de datos, 2021).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research draws upon media and journalism studies and a discursive institutionalist approach. The latter has its foundations in constructivism, in which social phenomena are constructed intersubjectively (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Hay, 2008). Thus, discursive institutionalism analyses institutions -such as journalism- through the discourses that account for their identities (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017; Lewis, 2012; Vos and Thomas, 2018).

It is in this context that we propose a different definition of media trust that moves away from the traditional concept of a relationship between trustor and trustee. For this research, media trust will be considered as a discursive construction, shaped by the interaction of different actors -journalistic and non-journalistic-, based on their metajournalistic discourses about the expectations of media performance.

This research aims to analyse journalists' narratives, which have so far been neglected in research on media trust. This is despite the fact that these metajournalistic discourses can not

only account for how journalists explain the crisis in media trust, but also for practices and normative aspects of journalism itself.

While some authors have questioned journalists' narratives as simplistic or distant from what actually happens in practice, Carlson defends their importance, noting that 'journalists falling back on commitments to objectivity, balance, and verification or espousing their role in democratic processes in simplistic ways may not appear reflexive, but they do reveal the internalised understandings underlying public arguments' and that their reiteration is a sign of 'deep-seated beliefs' about journalism (2016: 358).

This conceptual framework also considers as metajournalistic discourses the criticisms and evaluations made by audiences in Chile and the evidence of academic research regarding media trust. From this we can draw some key concepts: concentration of media ownership, homogeneity of the media agenda, bias and sensationalism.

In this sense, the aim of this research is to analyse the crisis in media trust and its impact on journalism from a discursive perspective. The expected contribution of this dissertation consists in the proposal of an alternative conceptual framework, which would allow for broader and relational understanding of media trust, unlike the traditional outlined approach.

Considering the above, research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do mainstream media journalists in Chile explain the crisis in media trust?

RQ2: How has this crisis in media trust impacted in Chilean journalism?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research strategy adopts a constructivist and qualitative approach, consistent with discursive institutionalism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Constructivism's underlying assumptions -social phenomena are constructed from the discourses of different actors (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Hay, 2008)- also inform the selected research tools, namely, in-depth interviews and reflexive thematic analysis.

In-depth interviews

The data collection method was defined after evaluating surveys, focus groups and interviews. Regarding surveys, the problem was that posing alternative answers to explain the drop in media trust could leave out positions with different rationales, which is one of the main criticisms of standardised surveys (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). That is especially important in this exploratory research, considering there is no previous data about Chilean journalists' discourses regarding the crisis in media trust. As for focus groups, I considered two practical reasons for discarding them. First, the difficulty of convening a group of journalists at the same time, given their unpredictable day, marked by breaking news. But above all, the risk of inhibiting opinions. For example, TV has been the target of numerous criticisms in Chile. Would journalists from other types of media tackle these issues alongside a TV journalist? Would the latter face criticism in the same way if they were not with them?

In contrast, an in-depth interview has important advantages. I contacted the editors directly, without any authorisation or knowledge of their media outlet, stressing that the interview would be conducted anonymously, as a space for free personal opinions. But above all, the interview allows answers grounded in narratives not previously considered in the literature review, while permitting the interviewer to adapt it with follow-up questions (Berger, 2012; Kallio *et al*., 2016). Both features are relevant for exploratory research such as this.

Language and translation

Interviews were conducted in Spanish with journalists from media outlets based in Santiago, Chile. In cross-cultural research, with interviews conducted in a language that is not the researcher's native language, a main concern is that the translated transcripts are culturally equivalent, considering the nuances and connotative meanings of the original (Marin and Marin, B. V., 1991; Lopez *et al*., 2008). However, in this research the case is different, since the interviewees and I, as the researcher, share Spanish as our native language. Therefore, data analysis was carried out on the basis of Spanish transcriptions of the audio-recorded interviews. In any case, the concern for an equivalent cultural translation is maintained but for data reporting (a fully translated transcript of one interview is in the appendices).

Sampling

Regarding the sample, the first step was to identify Chilean mainstream media. There is consensus that this concept essentially refers to media founded before the digital era, i.e., TV, radio and newspapers (Asak and Molale, 2020). Digital News Report includes a ranking of Top Brands in Chile, ordered by weekly usage (Newman *et al*., 2023: 117). Although there are media outlets in Chile not mentioned in this ranking that could be categorized as mainstream media, the fact that the ranking mentions the main ones in terms of usage reinforces another feature of mainstream media, namely, its broad audience reach (Reiter and Matthes, 2023). Consequently, I will consider as Chilean mainstream media the media outlets mentioned in the 2023 Digital News Report ranking, with some exceptions. One of them is LUN, which is editorially oriented to entertainment and show business coverage. The second is La Red, a TV station that since 2022 only broadcasts recorded content due to financial problems (Palta, 2022). We will also eliminate generic mentions, such as 'free city papers' or 'local TV news'. Thus, the final list has ten media outlets in total: five TV stations (Chilevisión, Mega, CNN Chile, TVN, Canal 13), three radio stations (Biobío, Cooperativa, ADN) and two newspapers (El Mercurio and La Tercera).

Another relevant definition is to interview editors of these media outlets as opposed to reporters. This is because editors are involved in key decisions that are at the heart of criticisms of mainstream media. They are responsible for the story framing, a process related to decision-making bias and content-bias (Entman, 2007). Regarding the gatekeeper role, editors are the ones who define whether a story is published or not (Allan, 2010) (in Chile, criticism points to the homogeneity of mainstream media's thematic agenda). Moreover, due to their high position in the media's organisational hierarchy, editors absorb external pressures and influences, filter them and eventually pass them on to reporters as internal decisions (Hanitzsch *et al*. 2019; Sjøvaag 2013). Thus, considering their experiences and essential role in journalistic performance and practices -which in turn should inform metajournalistic discourses- the sample universe will be editors of mainstream media in Chile. In terms of sample size, the most common approach is theoretical saturation (Gubrium, 2012), i.e., the final sample size is set when realization occurs that adding new interviewees does not provide

new information. However, this redundancy criterion has been criticised for some types of qualitative research, especially exploratory research (Malterud *et al*., 2016). In fact, theoretical saturation is not consistent with Reflexive Thematic Analysis -which we will use for data analysis and which will be addressed below- as establishing redundancy in the midst of data collection would force the evaluation of data on the basis of superficial themes constructed with a content summary criterion, rather than after a process of interpretation with themes constructed from shared meaning (Braun *et al*., 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2021b). In this context, acknowledging that there are no fixed formulas, Braun et al. state that 'our pragmatic 'rule of thumb' is at least five or six interviews for a (very) small project, assuming the data are rich, the sample relatively homogenous, the research question focused, and the output an unpublished dissertation' (2019: 852). For this research we will also consider an additional criterion, selecting editors from different types of media (TV, radio and newspapers) and different media outlets. The aim here is to find out whether there are shared characteristics in metajournalistic discourses despite these distinctions.

As for the sample strategy, I used convenience sampling (Robinson, 2014), contacting editors as I accessed their details and selecting those who responded on a first-come-first-served basis. The result was a final sample of nine editors, all of them from different media outlets: two from newspapers, three from radio stations and four from TV stations.

Because the interviews were conducted anonymously, interviewees will be identified according only to their media type, i.e., Newspaper 1, Newspaper 2, Radio 1, Radio 2, Radio 3, TV 1, TV 2, TV 3 and TV 4. All of them gave written consent.

Interview guide

The interview guide was built taking into account the conceptual framework from the theoretical chapter. It is divided into three main parts. First, a brief introduction, where the interviewee informed me about the type of media in which he or she works (TV, radio or newspapers) and how long he/she has been working as a journalist. Second, a grand-tour question, an 'opening, nondirective question' (McCracken, 1988: 6), aimed to respond RQ1, allowing the interviewee to develop his or her narrative about the drop in media trust and the central elements of his or her metajournalistic discourse.

After this grand-tour question and its respective follow-up questions to elaborate on relevant points, the interview guide is divided into two different options, including 'planned prompts' questions, 'to give respondents something to push off against' and 'to give them an opportunity to consider and discuss phenomena that do not come readily to mind or speech' (McCraken, 1988: 7). These two options were constructed by considering the distinction between endogenous and exogenous elements regarding media trust, as outlined in the theoretical chapter. Thus, when an interviewee's initial narrative has pointed to exogenous elements -political polarization or the influence social media, for instance- to explain the drop in media trust, he/she was asked about endogenous features, i.e. criticisms of Chilean media from audiences and academics/experts. For this purpose, taking as a reference what was outlined in the theoretical chapter, I selected the concepts of concentration of media ownership, homogeneity of the media's thematic agenda, bias, and sensationalism. In contrast, if the editor pointed in his initial answer to endogenous reasons, he was asked about exogenous elements, i.e., the influence of political polarisation and new digital media landscape. Returning to the idea of endogenous and exogenous reasons aims to encourage the interviewee to assess a different perspective and, at the same time, it can give us an idea of how self-critical the journalists' narratives are.

In both interview guide options, I asked what the media are doing or can do to address the causes he or she identified for the drop in media trust. The aim of this question is to answer RQ2, to the extent that the interviewee can construct a metajournalistic discourse including professional practices and/or values related to the crisis in media trust.

This interview guide was built considering an active interviewer approach, in which the interviewer 'activates narrative production' according to the research questions, provoking responses, 'not 'putting words in the respondent's mouth' but, rather, making a specific vocabulary salient' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 13). This approach, in turn, is based on considering editors as elite interviewees, who, because of their high position within media outlets and their knowledge of journalistic practices and standards, may try to avoid sensitive areas or topics (Darbi and Hall, 2014; Harvey, 2011; Natow, 2020).

The interview guide's third part is common to all interviewees and emerged from pilot research conducted with three editors. This pilot was important for several reasons. First, it allowed me to critically evaluate my own role as an interviewer accustomed to journalistic interviews. Thus, an important lesson was to avoid expressions or comments that could lead the interviewees' answers. In these first three interviews, there were some interventions of this type, although they did not refer to the essential contents addressed, and therefore did not constitute a reason to discard these three interviews. Secondly, the pilot research made it possible to modify an initial interview guide, eliminating questions that ended up being redundant.

In the third place, two new elements came into view that were not initially considered due to answers in the pilot interviews. The first one was an editor's claim that the main challenge for mainstream media is to 'have a better understanding of their audiences'. The question I then asked myself was whether as a researcher I was assigning to media trust a capital relevance that the interviewee did not assign to it. Therefore, I added to the interview guide a question about whether media trust is the main challenge for mainstream media. The second topic arose from an editor's account of what had happened in the days following the social outburst in Chile, describing it as a time when, in his opinion, mainstream media lost its 'critical approach' due to 'fear' of public protests or the 'need to empathise with citizens' demands'. Thus, a question about whether this happened in mainstream media was added. Changes in editorial standards, their reasons and consequences can be relevant to interpret the impact of the crisis in media trust in journalism.

As stated above, the three interviews conducted for the pilot research were kept as part of the final sample, considering that the flaws identified in the pilot were essentially ones of form and did not affect the narratives constructed by the editors. All of the nine interviews were conducted via Zoom and audio-recorded for later transcriptions.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The analytic method used in this research is Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), developed mainly by Braun & Clarke (2006, 2016, 2019, 2021a; Braun *et al*. 2019). RTA is theoretically independent and flexible, unlike - for instance - Critical Discourse Analysis, which is linked

to the relationship between language and power (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). Consequently, for data analysis in this dissertation, RTA's flexibility allows us to use the conceptual framework, as outlined above, on media trust and metajournalistic discourses, framed in media and journalism studies.

RTA is distanced from other thematic analysis approaches such as 'coding reliability', in which themes are understood as topics or domain summaries, providing a description of responses even though they may contain meanings that differ from each other (Braun *et al*., 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2016). In contrast, in RTA themes reflect 'a pattern of shared meaning', 'they unite data that might otherwise appear disparate, or meaning that occurs in multiple and varied contexts; they (often) explain large portions of a dataset; they are often abstract entities or ideas, capturing implicit ideas 'beneath the surface' of the data, but can also capture more explicit and concrete meaning' (Braun *et al*., 2019: 845). In other words, RTA's aim is to provide a researcher's interpretation of the data. The underlying assumptions behind the two approaches are different: in 'coding reliability', themes emerge or are found in the data by the researcher; in RTA, themes are developed, in a process that is 'inherently subjective, involving active, creative and reflexive researcher engagement' (Braun and Clarke, 2016: 741). Researcher subjectivity is understood 'as not just valid but a resource' and the researcher interprets the data through 'the lens of their own cultural membership and social positionings, their theoretical assumptions and ideological commitments, as well as their scholarly knowledge' (Braun *et al*., 2019: 849). My positionality as a researcher will be addressed below.

RTA is not consistent with a codebook identifying themes prior to data analysis, so we used an inductive, data-driven approach to develop themes. These were constructed with a criterion of relevance in terms of answering the research questions and not on how many times they were mentioned in the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thus, a first familiarisation with the data took place by transcribing the interviews. Then, after four rounds of reading these transcripts, I made a first definition of codes, producing 236 in total. These were initially grouped into 12 themes, which underwent subsequent changes in a two-level process: on the one hand, by reviewing the codes that made up each theme and, in parallel, by evaluating the definition of these themes in comparison with the other themes and

regarding the research questions. At this point, I arrived at what I initially considered to be eight final themes. However, the elaboration of a thematic map allowed for a new theme evaluation: the eight mentioned themes became subthemes (informed, in turn, by other subthemes of lower hierarchy and relevant codes) and two new main overarching themes were defined. The analysis grid with themes and subthemes is included in the appendices.

Ethics and reflexivity

Discussing elite interviews, Darbi & Hall (2014) posit that the researcher could adjust his or her positionality on a continuum of insider/outsider regarding the interviewees, depending on the situation. For Figenschou (2010), a researcher with insider status risks overlooking important controversial material. Conversely, for Finlay (2020) what is central is to recognise that the researcher's subjectivity is the starting point of the research and that, given the same data, another researcher might obtain different conclusions. In a similar perspective, Braun et al. point out that 'many reflexive Thematic Analysis researchers do indeed have some kind of social justice motivation -be it 'giving voice' to a socially marginalized group, or a group rarely allowed to speak or be heard in a particular context, or a more radical agenda of social critique or change' (2019: 849).

In that context, I do not think it is possible for a researcher to adjust his internal/external status according to his convenience. My positioning is that of a former insider in a current outsider role, both at the same time. That is to say, a journalist and former political editor in Chilean mainstream media who is researching -as part of his dissertation- media trust and metajournalistic discourses in Chilean mainstream media.

As a journalist, I am concerned about the weakening of journalism, in Chile in particular, specially because mainstream media has been losing its capacity to promote deliberative debate and to prevent the degradation of public sphere (Habermas, 2022). However, this positioning is not synonymous with submissiveness towards journalists' narratives; on the contrary, it encourages the need to critically reflect on them. Before starting this research, my concern was about how best to identify the elements that influence the decline in media trust. However, my informal conversations with journalists and audiences strengthened the idea that the discourses of these actors could have a relevant impact on how we understand what

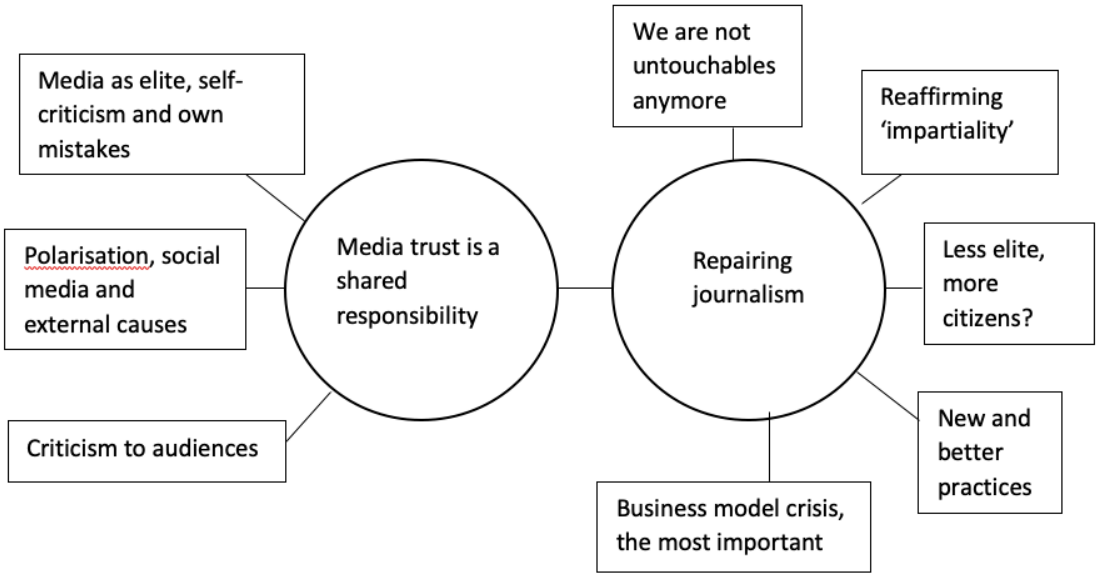
media trust is and what influences it, independent of the evidence provided by academic research. In no way does this mean undervaluing the latter; on the contrary, it implies recognising that social reality is constructed on the basis of discourses that, in more than one case, ignore such evidence. With this premise, interpreting journalistic discourses on media trust seeks not only to understand this phenomenon, but also to expose these narratives to evaluation and scrutiny.

As a researcher, it is necessary to constantly reflect on every stage of the research (Finlay, 2020), to ensure that, for example, data analysis is conducted with a data-driven approach. That is also the reason for the additional criterion for defining the sample (including mainstream media editors from different media types and different media outlets), and the incorporation in the interview guide of the question about how relevant media trust is to mainstream media, allowing space for my assumption about its importance to be challenged by the interviewees.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From the data analysis process, I constructed two main overarching themes. Each of them responds to one of the research questions. Thus, the first main overarching theme to be analysed, 'Media trust is a shared responsibility', answers the question of how mainstream media journalists in Chile explain the crisis in media trust. The second theme, 'Repairing journalism', answers the question of how has this crisis in media trust impacted Chilean journalism. These two main overarching themes, as well as the subthemes they group together, form the following Thematic Map 1:

Thematic Map 1



The analysis below includes the two main overarching themes and their respective subthemes, as well as relevant quotes from the interviewees.

Media trust is a shared responsibility

One of the questions asked to all interviewees was what, in their opinion, was the main cause of the drop in media trust in Chile. The interviewees were divided into two groups. On the one hand, those who point to reasons exogenous to the media, such as political polarisation, social media and criticism of political authorities towards media (Newspaper 1 and 2, Radio 3, TV 1, 3 and 4). On the other hand, those who place the main responsibility on the media, based on their mistakes and deficits (Radio 1 and 2; and TV 2). However, this in no way means that the interviewees point to a single cause for the decline in media trust. On the contrary, throughout the interviews they mentioned various elements and actors, which were grouped into three subthemes, which will be analysed below.

Political polarisation, social media, and exogenous causes

This subtheme groups together the elements external to the media that, according to the interviewees, influence media trust. Regarding political polarisation, several interviewees (Newspaper 1 and 2, Radio 1 and 2, TV 3) highlighted the fact that while in the months following the social outburst of 2019 media trust plummeted to unprecedented levels,

coinciding with one of the most politically polarised periods in Chile since the end of the dictatorship in 1990, the arrival of the Covid pandemic in 2020 meant a recovery in media trust. The latter was said by interviewees as evidence that political polarisation does influence media trust. As part of this scenario of political polarisation, they also mentioned politicians' criticisms of the media. TV 3 argued that this questioning, which included the president of Chile, was the most relevant cause for the drop in media trust.

The interviewees also mentioned social media, which they link to the dissemination of fake news, promotion of extreme political positions and criticism of mainstream media. For Radio 3, social media is like a 'fire blower', fuelling media distrust. For TV 2, social media promotes a 'pseudo-truth' based, for example, on trending topics, which 'finally, when people looked for them in the evening (on the TV newscast), they couldn't find them and immediately began to criticize'. Radio 3 recounts his experience of investigating on the ground a false report of human rights violation during the social outburst, which - despite being corroborated as false - people on the street continued to believe to be true because 'it's on Twitter, everyone says it on Twitter. So, my work as a reporter had no validity versus the opinion installed on Twitter'. For Newspaper 2, social media allows the creation of 'tribes' that, according to him, 'question what appears in the media and, therefore, they say: 'Ah, media are lying to me, because what they tell me here, those that I trust who are my tribe, tell me that this is not true, therefore, I trust them more than the media' and that ends up affecting more the trust in the media'. In the case of Newspaper 1 and 2, they pointed to a combination of political polarisation and social media as a relevant element in the fall in media trust.

Media as elite, self-criticism and their own mistakes

All interviewees recognised media mistakes as part of the reasons for the drop in media trust, including some of the audience criticisms (detailed in the theoretical chapter), such as homogeneity in the media's thematic agenda. The lack of diversity extends, according to TV 2, to the sources, as official sources are prioritised. This is explained in different ways: Radio 2 said that it is a mixture of, in some cases, 'bias' towards political positions and, in others, 'the agenda that one is used to carry on'. TV 2 agreed, saying that the homogeneous agenda may be a 'professional malformation', although Radio 3 said there is 'self-censorship'.

Regarding undue influence from politicians or media owners - another criticism of audiences in Chile - there are different positions. For TV 1, media outlets make 'concessions' to its owners, but not on a regular basis: 'the vast majority of the time, media are independent, both from political and commercial power. There is a small part where they are not', adding that 'it doesn't have to be big things to execute. See? It's not waving flags or slogans. It's not like they turn the media outlet into that'. For Radio 3, however, the influence of the media owners is a widespread issue and limits coverage. TV 2, meanwhile, claimed that bias in coverage is a 'myth'.

Despite these nuances, the interviewees agreed that media's own mistakes or deficits - including the ownership structure- underlie audience perceptions that, in turn, feed the decline in media trust. Even if they argue that some of these perceptions may be wrong, they would find justification in media errors. 'I see a lot of responsibility on our part as media for the loss of credibility and trust, it is not only because the polarised climate, but I think we made mistakes, without a doubt', TV 3 said. 'Own mistakes, obviously, it leads people to think, yes, they are... Here there is information that is being given out extremely... very fragmented', TV 2 argued. Meanwhile, for Radio 1, 'as long as there are no barriers regarding the verticality of the investment, that is to say that a person who owns a bank cannot own a media outlet or be present in the area that can, let's say, economically nourish a media outlet. Obviously, suspicion is going to be high'.

Beyond the media's specific errors, the interviewees also agreed that at the base of the audience's criticism is the idea that mainstream media are part of the elite, which in turn has been linked to cases of corruption (TV 2) and which, according to TV1, was seen as the group 'that was in charge and earned all the money', something that was among the 'causes of the outburst'. Newspaper 2 pointed out that 'we have also been elitising ourselves, let's say? Eh, we have been concentrating on stories about influence and power, because of our evident desire to be actors in this public discussion, but sometimes we have forgotten or we have not been able to see deeper and more real problems that are happening to people in other areas of society'. Radio 2 argued that 'media had little of normal people on their agenda, in general'. For TV 2, 'the fact that people have perceived us as part of the elite, when in fact what we

should be doing is making them uncomfortable in one way or another, is a mistake of media. That we didn't know or didn't perceived that feeling in order to respond effectively'.

Criticism of audiences

While interviewees acknowledged media errors as relevant to the drop in media trust and also pointed to the context of polarisation and social media, at the same time they made harsh criticisms of audiences and their assessments of media trust. Newspaper 1 said there is 'information bias' from audiences, as they believe 'what they want to believe'. For Radio 3, it is easy to criticise the media because of the absence of content by reading or watching only part of the newspaper or the TV newscast. Radio 2 said that people are guilty of 'cherry picking', choosing some particular content or mistake to generalise about bias in media, and at the same time, placing a media outlet in a certain political position, but 'a week later people are able to place it in another extreme place to, uh, question their work'. Newspaper 2 said that the accusation of political influence is 'unfair' and that audiences confuse the latter with editorial lines. Meanwhile, Radio 1 said that during the social outburst, audiences placed on the media an incorrect 'burden of proof', blaming media for 'not having lived up to' the last years' social demands, something that is 'unfair'.

In summary, the three subthemes above allow us to form the interpretation that, for the interviewees, the drop in media trust is not only attributable to mainstream media and that, on the contrary, it is a shared responsibility. This journalistic narrative allows to answer RQ1:

the crisis in media trust is explained by an interplay of actors and a combination of influences, among which are media mistakes -editors acknowledge several of them and above all, having positioned themselves as or being seen as part of the elite- but also, political polarisation, social media effects and what they describe as 'unfair' audience evaluations. This implies that the concept of media trust is currently a space of discursive dispute between journalists and audiences, as the latter identify the media as the only ones responsible for the decline in media trust.

At the heart of this dispute are two elements. First, the aforementioned discursive gap between the discourses of journalists and audiences about the causes of the crisis in media

trust. Second, the fact that it is a two-way distrust: not only audiences distrust the media, but also journalists distrust audiences (by pointing to 'unfair' evaluations). It is this backdrop of mutual distrust that is underlying the crisis in media trust in Chile. For the media, the media trust crisis exists and is severe, to the point that for several of the editors it is a priority to address it; which does not imply that some of the interviewees say that its magnitude includes an element of 'unfair', exaggerated or polarised evaluations by audiences.

Repairing journalism

Repairing journalism is the second main overarching theme. It allows us to answer RQ2, how has the crisis in media trust impacted Chilean journalism. In other words, while the previous theme aimed to understand the reasons for the crisis, this one groups the journalists' narratives around its effects on media and how they are dealing with it. This theme contains five subthemes, analysed below.

We are not untouchables anymore

The social outburst of 2019 was a turning point for mainstream media. TV 3 said that before this, 'it didn't matter what we put on screen because we were on a TV station where people watched us no matter what' and 'we didn't measure the impact if we could make a mistake'. Radio 2 said that the media was not 'rupturist' because, in its own assessment of its work, 'it was comfortable with the way it was'. The outburst, however, meant a relevant change: 'a more explicit criticism of media. We were no longer the untouchables we had always been'. The outburst meant not only criticism, but also aggression and threats against journalists and media outlets, 'if you were not in coordination with what they were demanding in the street', as Radio 1 put it.

Following that, interviewees identified the outburst as a moment of change in the status of the media, a call from the audiences that forced an evaluation of these criticisms and the practices carried out up to that moment.

Reaffirming 'impartiality'

Audience criticisms that emerged during the outburst had a correlate inside newsrooms. Interviewees agreed that some journalists, especially the younger ones, 'forgot their main function as journalists for their emotions or convictions', as Newspaper 2 put it. For Radio 2, it was 'enthusiasm' that 'overcame critical thinking, or the duty and critical capacity that media should have'. Both these internal and external pressures had an effect on media outlets and, as Radio 1 put it, 'there was a need to empathise and that probably led to headlines and overblown quotes, editorial stories', adding that 'critical capacity was lost'. According to TV 2, 'media, yes, clearly succumbed to that. And there were many journalists who succumbed to that (...) they relativised certain things that effectively pointed to violence, pointed to disunity. Well, pointed to situations that should never have been relativised because we had a clear editorial line'.

The interviewees have a critical evaluation of those moments and, as a response to that, they reaffirmed traditional normative journalistic standards, such as 'impartiality'. According to Radio 2: 'To be committed to what was happening in Chile it was not necessary, let's say, it was not necessary to wave flags with the flag-wavers, but rather to observe the process, give coverage, in short. I understand that this exercise, for example, has taken place in several places, I know places where it has taken place, of saying: 'Yeah, how did this happen over there', and taking that lesson to see how to do whatever happens today'. 'We forget that our main responsibility is to tell the reality and not to, uh, ascribe to a view of reality, let's say, ok?', Newspaper 2 said. Thus, the interviewees rejected criticism, for example, of not promptly publishing allegations during the outburst -which in some cases would end up being false- on the basis of 'rigorousness' (TV 2). In the same vein, one of the interviewees vindicated the media's reaction to one of the emblematic cases of human rights violations after the outburst, that of current Senator Fabiola Campillai, who in November 2019, while on her way to work, was hit by a tear gas bomb thrown by a policeman, resulting in fractures to her face and skull and complete loss of vision (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, n.d.). Radio 2 said that the media reacted with 'caution' to the first reports of this, considering that weeks earlier some media outlets had published false information about a non-existent detention and torture

centre in a Metro station. At the time, according to Radio 2, this initial cautious reaction prompted some journalists to describe the media as 'timorous'.

In this context, as a way of further reaffirming values such as impartiality, Radio 2 proposed that the media outlet's editorial guidelines expressly include the need to separate the role of journalist from that of 'citizen', as a lesson learned from what happened. In this sense, the return to the 'impartiality' prior to the outburst is understood as a 'return to the way we worked before' (Radio 1).

These latter narratives point to normative aspects of how journalism should be, in this case, to address the crisis in media trust, a feature of metajournalistic discourses. In that regard, they involve a boundary work process to define what is acceptable in journalism (Carlson, 2016).

Less elite, more citizens?

One of the deficits recognised by interviewees in the previous theme was that the media was seen by the audience as part of the elite. In this sense, some interviewees defined the drop in media trust as a 'distancing between the general public and media' (Newspaper 2), 'no closeness' with 'the citizens' (Radio 2), and, at the same time, understanding the citizens as something different or opposed to the 'institutions' (TV 3). Thus, the bet to increase media trust is to distance itself from the elite - seen as corrupt and dominant, as detailed in the previous subtheme - in order to get closer to the citizenry. 'We need to go hand in hand with the citizen and not with the elite. That does not mean that we are going to be against them. But this is our side, not the other one,' TV 2 said. In fact, this logic is used to explain why radio is the most trusted type of media, above newspapers and TV: the spaces for participation and interaction with citizens and its greater presence in regions and not only in the country's capital are key, according to Radio 1 and TV 1.

However, this change from elite to citizens has some problems, mentioned by Newspaper 1, who argued that mainstream media has a double dependency relationship with the elite: on the one hand, coincidence of orientations (precisely what they now want to change, for orientations aligned with citizens) and, on the other, in terms of financing and ownership

structures. Both elements explain, in the opinion of Newspaper 1, why mainstream media produces content for an elite audience who 'we don't want them to dislike us. In other words, yes, but no'.

Another problem -or risk- of the shift towards citizens is raised by Newspaper 2: 'that we end up writing or giving these audiences what they want, instead of doing the work that corresponds to us as media, which is to highlight what we as media consider to be important for society (...) for that, we'd better go home and let artificial intelligence do the job'. Although he is the only interviewee who mentioned this specific point, it is relevant insofar as it is a disputed issue among the interviewees: Radio 1 said that knowing audiences better is the main challenge for media, while TV 2 and Radio 2 pointed out that, on the contrary, the most important thing is to build trust rather than orient the media's agenda only to the audiences' interests. In this sense, this is an important discussion considering that some of the interviewees point to the risk that the shift towards citizens could end up in a hyper-orientation towards audiences, weakening the media's editorial lines, its capacity to influence the public agenda or its gatekeeping role, already diluted by social media.

New and better practices

Despite the reaffirmation of traditional journalism paradigm values such as impartiality, the interviewees said that the media has incorporated new practices. These seek to address the mistakes that, by their own admission, the media have made in recent years.

Some of these new practices, detailed by different editors are: fewer official sources and more citizen sources; greater audience participation and attention to issues close to them; fact checking and more rigorous checking processes of information from social media, emphasising -at the same time- the contrast with fake news and with alternative media outlets, who published 'smoke bombs' (TV 2) during the outburst; and greater interpretation of facts to explain them better to audiences.

These practices are consistent with the two themes detailed above, i.e., with the decision to distance themselves from the elite and to get closer to the citizens and in reaffirming the values of the traditional paradigm of journalism. In the latter case, it can be understood that by

emphasising opposition to fake news and alternative media, mainstream media also seeks to reinforce the construction of journalistic authority (Carlson, 2017).

Business model crisis, the most important

Several interviewees agreed that there is a structural factor that complicates the media's initiatives to improve journalistic performance: lower revenues resulting from the business model crisis. For TV 2 and 4, Newspaper 2, Radio 3, this is the main challenge for media outlets today. For TV 4, lower incomes generate 'job insecurity' for journalists. TV 2 stated that 'we are working with much fewer resources than before (...) today we are working with journalists who have less experience'. Radio 3 argued that due to lack of resources 'in some places that I know, of course, there is a precariousness that makes it impossible to have rigorous journalistic routines'.

All the subthemes mentioned above comprise the main theme 'Repairing journalism'. The reaffirmation of traditional professional values such as 'impartiality' or 'rigorousness' and the incorporation of new practices to overcome one's own mistakes can be interpreted as process of paradigm repair (Vos and Moore, 2020), in the sense that the pressure of the protests and from young journalists to empathise with the social demands during the outburst - and in some cases to publish allegations that ultimately ended up being false - was understood by the interviewees as a call to abandon central elements of journalistic paradigm, associated with the concept of objectivity. This 'enthusiasm' or emotionality of younger journalists -as an editor named it- is, in fact, qualified as a breach of journalistic 'duty' and it is set outside of journalistic boundaries (Carlson, 2016), highlighting the normative character of the discussion.

The incorporation of new journalistic practices to amend the acknowledge errors is part of a process of repairing and not of reconsideration or transformation of the journalistic paradigm, in the sense that they are incorporated without modifying the essential values (Vos and Moore, 2020). This process of repairing and not transforming journalism can also be understood as a reaffirmation of the editorial lines prior to the outburst, considering, as Radio 1 said, that media outlets went back to working 'as before'.

In this line, the pressure to transform the journalistic paradigm ended as a boomerang effect, with the reaffirmation of its central elements. Even the editorial lines questioned at the height of the outburst were reaffirmed.

However, this process of repair also has three threats or risks. First, the business model crisis, whose decline in revenues conspires against plans to improve journalistic practices or strengthen newsrooms.

Second, the decision to repair the paradigm has some internal detractors: 'Not all people in the media closed the curtain', Radio 2 said. 'Within the media itself there is perhaps also a certain level of distrust and they are affected by polarisation', Newspaper 1 added.

Third, a complex relationship between mainstream media and audiences. On the one hand, interviewees agree that the media should distance itself from the elites and get closer to citizens. How deep this rapprochement with audiences should be, however, is a matter of disagreement. While some editors point out that the main challenge for the media is to get to know audiences better in order to improve content delivery, others say that to do what audiences want is to abdicate journalism's obligation to define and highlight what is truly relevant. Underlying this division is the mistrust of audiences in the media, as discussed above.

In addition to that, the idea of getting closer to audiences as opposed to elite opens up a space of tension and/or contradiction within the journalistic narratives, since the interests or demands of citizens are not always aligned with the values of a journalistic paradigm associated with impartiality or objectivity, nor with the editorial lines of media outlets. Especially considering that the ownership structure of mainstream media implies a direct relationship with the elite, as one of the editors admitted.

Moreover, the journalistic discourse that promises to place mainstream media closer to the citizens rather than the elite could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, as a project aligned with traditional aims of journalism: not reporting on citizens' concerns is not good journalism. On the other hand, as an utilitarian turn, in which the media moved from a comfortable space close to the elite -as one editor defined it- to maintaining a distance from it

insofar this association was detrimental to mainstream media. The two interpretations, however, are not mutually exclusive.

CONCLUSION

A central contribution of this dissertation is the proposal of an alternative conceptual framework for approaching media trust. This allowed me to have a broad view of the crisis of media trust, on a structural level and with a relational approach, characterising it as a gap between the discourses of journalists and audiences, understanding media trust as a space of discursive dispute. A dispute that is nourished by a two-way distrust: audiences who distrust the mainstream media and, at the same time, journalists who distrust audiences.

At the same time, the proposed conceptual framework allowed to understand – drawing upon journalistic discourses - how the media trust crisis has impacted journalism, triggering a process of paradigm repair, marked by tensions and contradictions.

In this sense, there are several lines to propose further research. Regarding the situation in Chile, a first topic would be the evaluation of the mainstream media narrative, in the sense of whether its values, practices and promise of getting closer to citizens are truly reflected in the thematic agenda and content production from mainstream media. Secondly, the identification and characterization of possible resistance discourses among mainstream media journalists, considering, as some editors have said, there are critical sectors within the media who want a paradigm transformation and not to repair it.

Beyond what is happening in Chile, a line to explore in further research would be the use of this conceptual framework to characterise and evaluate the situation of media trust in other geographical, social and cultural contexts. Are there also gaps between journalists and audiences on the causes of the drop in media trust?

It also seems interesting to investigate the distrust from journalists towards audiences. It is something related only to the Chilean context and, if not, to what extent does it impact on journalistic practices and values? Could be a counterweight to the idea that journalism is

moving towards a new media regime with audience engagement as the main criterion (Nelson, 2019)?

Another possible line of research aims to find out to what extent attacks on the traditional paradigm of journalism result in a boomerang effect, with the reaffirmation of the central elements of this paradigm, as occurred in Chile. Does the same happen in other highly polarised contexts, marked by constant criticism and attacks on the media by politicians? How does this impact the alternative media?

But above all, a possible relevant line of research would aim to better understand the relationship between media trust and journalistic authority. In Chile, the way journalists deal with the crisis in media trust has disparate effects for journalistic authority, strengthening it but at the same time opening up the risk of weakening it. On the one hand, by setting boundaries and reaffirming traditional values such as 'impartiality', they strengthen those professional values as sources of authority. However, by trying to get closer to audiences, they weaken the asymmetry in the relationship between media and audiences, another source of journalistic authority, according to Carlson (2017).

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