

COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

Miscellaneous

Salomé Sola-Morales

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7085-4595>

ssolamorales@gmail.com

Universidad de Sevilla

Carla Quiroz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5379-4041>

c.quiroz.carvajal@gmail.com

Universidad de Santiago de Chile

Submitted

November 25th, 2017

Approved

September 26th, 2018

© 2019

Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.32.2.157-173

www.communication-society.com

2019 – Vol. 32(2)

pp. 157-173

How to cite this article:

Sola-Morales, S. & Quiroz, C.

(2019). Drug Abuse Prevention Campaigns in Chile (2004-2014): Between Prohibitionism and Stigmatisation. *Communication & Society*, 32(2), 157-173.

Drug Abuse Prevention Campaigns in Chile (2004-2014): Between Prohibitionism and Stigmatisation

Abstract

This paper studies the presence and reproduction of the ‘prohibitionist’ paradigm in the Chilean state’s drug policy by studying its drug abuse prevention campaigns. By means of a content analysis of the television spots broadcast between 2004 and 2014, the discursive and ideological elements present in these campaigns were examined. First and foremost, the results show that, despite institutional change and the creation of bodies such as the National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Use (SENDA) and the National Council for Narcotics Control (CONACE), the state’s discourse has remained focused on the prohibitionist paradigm, resorting to highly stereotyped emotional messages. Secondly, drug consumption has been stigmatised and framed in profoundly dramatic contexts in which users belong to the criminal underworld or have physical and/or cognitive impairments. Thirdly, notwithstanding the fact that there are certain differences between the communication approaches employed by the SENDA and the CONACE, the discourses of both institutions are very uniform and reductionist. In order to design more efficient media campaigns, target audiences should be encouraged to analyse and ponder reflectively on the issue by conveying rational messages that contrast facts and data and offer a positive vision stressing the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Keywords

Public Policies, Communicational Campaigns, Prohibitionism, Drugs, Chile.

1. Introduction

Since the last half of the twentieth century to date, the war on drugs (hereinafter, WOD) has formed part of government agendas and the international political debate. Nevertheless and in spite of the steady increase in resources for combating drug trafficking and preventing consumption, the results have left a lot to be desired. In point of fact, drug production has not decreased and drug use is on the rise in many Latin American countries, where drug-related violence is posing an increasingly more serious problem (Dammert, 2009).

Over the past few years, the Chilean public agenda has been marked by the debate on how television represents illegal drug users. This representation has been challenged by academia (Dammert, 2009; Rementería, 2009; Scalia, 2005), in light of the fact that the WOD, a policy historically promoted by the USA, has done little to promote the rehabilitation of

problem drug users. Quite the contrary, in fact, for it has favoured a media discourse that stigmatises them, as will be seen below.

The crackdown on illicit substances began during the Cold War in the context of the clash between two cultural models, i.e. capitalism versus communism (Gutiérrez, 2009). Even though the WOD was, in the first instance, waged at home by the US political establishment, it now affects the rest of America and many Western countries. It is in the framework of this polarisation that the WOD has emerged, whose objective is to reduce drug use and to prosecute those producing and trafficking with illegal substances. An identical policy has been implemented in Latin America, since most of the drugs reaching USA, among other countries, are produced in the region.

The WOD is understood as a public policy designed to control the illegal trafficking of natural and synthetic substances considered to have harmful effects on health. Hence, it has been adopted as a discretionary public policy model or idea that has been implemented differently in each context (Miranda & Iglesias, 2015).

Since 1980, this policy has stood out for its focus on the external enemy –drug supply– rather than on the internal problem –consumption (García, 1996). At a media level, Gutiérrez (2009) observed that to implement this US international policy Latin America has adopted an ‘emergency discourse’, which transforms drug users into non-people or external enemies of the established social order. In this respect, the characterisation generally employed is that of the ‘persecuted’, inferior being, the inhumane criminal responsible for all social evils, thus justifying the widespread repressive measures taken by an overbearing and authoritarian state whose purpose is to maintain order (Gutiérrez, 2009).

US drug policy led to the tightening of laws, which subsequently had a huge impact on both the country’s legal and prison systems and the lives of prisoners and their families and communities. The implementation of this policy clashed with other international instruments, such as human rights, arms control and environmental protection. Instead of protecting societies and bolstering weak states without the wherewithal to deal with this dilemma, this strategy exacerbated existing problems relating to governability, crime, insecurity and violence. This was due, in part, to the fact that the spotlight was all but exclusively placed on drug trafficking, rather than on combating organised crime that had diversified into other activities, both illegal and legal, thus distorting policy, destroying institutions and hamstringing states (Ramírez, 2017).

In this context, the media play a decisive role in conveying the potential effects of the WOD, for they have the ability to shape individual and group perceptions about drug addiction and to create stereotypes. This role is so important that, in many cases, a specific image of reality will have a greater impact the more widespread it becomes. The social control exerted by the media is nothing more than the deployment of tactics, strategies and forces for creating hegemony, namely, for pursuing legitimisation or building a consensus in favour of the dominant ideology (Aniyar, 1987; Vega, 2004). Here, state discourse has the ability to shape reality, since it not only classifies and prescribes what is unlawful, but also defines what is lawful in a supplementary fashion (Espinoza & Íñiguez, 2017).

In this vein, the problem would lie in the way in which the media approach the topic, considering the functioning of the communication industry with its assembly lines, standards and quality control (Verón, 1987, p. 2). Even though there are relatively few daily newscasts, television produces images that endure in the collective memory and ensure a consistent social imaginary (Verón, 1987, p. 195). In plain English, neither is the credibility of information broadcast on radio and television gauged using the same criteria, nor is television news tailored to the same audiences as press news.

In the case of the WOD, the media serve as a rhetorical space in which collective and ideological representations leading to the stigmatisation of drug users are reproduced. In this sense and following the arguments set out by Paolo Scalia (2012), Gutiérrez (2009) claims that

it is possible to see “how the invention of an enemy is not the exclusive result of criminal legislation, but calls for the construction of elaborate stereotypes in social imaginaries, for which the media and the institutions are indispensable” (p. 141). Furthermore, information appears to be trapped between the problem’s dramatisation and banalisation. Its dramatisation gives rise to interest and curiosity and entails the risk of increasing the desire to experiment with drugs, while its banalisation normalises drug use, thus converting it into a mundane matter that is then glossed over (Korbblit & Verón, 1989).

So, we should ask ourselves whether the role of the media is that of reflecting public opinion or contributing to shape it (Piro, 1996, p. 90). For Parvex (1996, p. 97), the reason behind the exclusive use of police sources for producing drug-related news is to depict drug users as an information topic pertaining to crime.

Scalia (2012) notes that, in official political-legal discourses, the enemies ‘drug addict’ and ‘micro-trafficker-offender’, among others, are objectivised social images which are then interiorised and endorsed by the negative connotations that they have in criminal law. This is the symbolic basis on which the prohibitionist discourse rests. After being recognised as valid, it then led certain states to adopt a legal position and, eventually, a common approach to tackling the issue, always legitimised by the drug laws in force.

The suffering that these social and discursive constructs can cause drug users is linked to forms of violence that are present in all societies: “discrimination, stigmatisation, lack of expectations and despair, marginalisation and illegality [...]” (Epele, 2002, p. 124). Daily violence includes expressions or acts of aggression among people, which is useful for normalising “violence, such as domestic rows, crime and drug addiction, at a microsocial level” (Bourgois, 2002, p. 76).

In this connection, the information victory of the prohibitionist discourse resides in having managed to build a social consensus on the need to eradicate illegal drugs so as to improve public safety. At the same time, it has generated certain *clichés* and platitudes, which are not even debated or contended now due to their ability to produce ideas with such a powerful meaning that they result in a hegemonic social discourse (Scalia, 2012). In order to generate this subjective social construct, these prohibitionist *clichés* must be used and reproduced by institutions, in this case by all those that resort to punitive measures, imprisonment or committal and, of course, by the media.

However, the effectiveness of this prohibitionist approach has been challenged by many actors. For example, the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), held in 1998, reflected the tension between the prohibitionist discourse and the alternative perspectives of harm reduction (hereinafter, HR). Even though the prohibitionist approach was ratified in the final declaration, there were dissenting voices both in the preliminary meetings and in the assembly (García, 1996). And notwithstanding the fact that the inefficiency of current drug policies in several regions of the world was addressed at the Special Session of the UNGASS in 2016, many of the dogmatic positions remained constant, resisting any policy change. Hence, it was impossible to make a systematic multilateral assessment of current policies or to redefine principles for their comprehensive and concerted reformulation. As a matter of fact, the final document, “Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem,” neither recognises the failure of current policies nor their devastating consequences, and instead of pursuing “a drug-free world,” refers to promoting “a society free from drug abuse” (Ramírez, 2017).

For their part, the alternative perspectives have to do with the opening up and multiplication of opportunities. To wit, plans are not based on a model, but on dialogue between these HR agents, drug users, their neighbours, grassroots community organisations and care services (Vitale, 2015, p. 230). For there to be a true paradigm shift, the state should regulate the drug market through the granting of licences for their cultivation, production and commercialisation or should have a monopoly on them (Bedoya, 2016).

2. The communication campaign as a paradigm of social control

But what is behind the construction of such stereotypes? For René Girard (1989), the construction of stereotypes and the persecution of those pigeonholed as such often occurs in times of crisis. The author defines 'crisis' as a lack of differentiation and the disappearance of rules and hierarchies as a result, for example, of wars, epidemics or natural disasters. Nevertheless, this does not always happen when there is a crisis. It also occurs when there are groups that recognise an order different from the dominant hierarchy. To the point that the only way of maintaining that hierarchy is to eliminate 'another', a violence that in turn brings about the 'otherness' of a crisis which, instead of seeking collective transformation, prefers stigmatisation and persecution.

The circumstances stemming from crises are those that tend to propitiate emergency discourses that transform enemies into non-persons opposing an 'order' (Girard, 1989). In this regard, public welfare communication campaigns play a prominent role insofar as they represent the state's position and their broad dissemination is used to deploy representations. Along the same lines, for Ledesma (1997) in welfare campaigns "ideological issues are very much at stake or, better said, there is maximum ideological tension. It is the very character of communication that bestows on them this quality, since, as their aim is to persuade, they are deployed in the realm of opinion and, from that perspective, address all social views" (p. 66). Campaigns of this type maintain a link between the message and the context in which it emerges and is conveyed. Following this line of thought, Ledesma observes that these campaigns are more socio-cultural constructs than anything else, "whose target is not consumption but the modification, regulation or organisation of behaviours relating to the so-called 'public welfare'. By 'modification' we are referring to the introduction of desirable changes –in specific sectors– with respect to health, education and public life" (Ledesma, 1997, p. 70).

Public welfare campaigns include those aimed at drug abuse prevention whose main objectives are to raise awareness about the risks associated with it and to modify personal and social behaviours through actions promoting health and welfare (Barra & Zamudio, 2015).

Drug abuse prevention campaigns are an eminently public instrument because of their civic character and should thus respect social diversity and, in turn, promote democracy. García Canclini (2002) suggests thinking about the public sphere as "the space that enables us to meet one another without destroying ourselves. This requires public authorities [...] that penalise merely individualistic or mercantile urges. This control, which allows for a minimum degree of social cohesion, is expected to be democratic, shared and rationally deliberated" (p. 151).

In this respect, the Spanish Ministry of Health's National Plan on Drugs (1988) already hinted that in campaigns it is very hard to find a message that is true, indisputable, understandable to all and universally preventive, bearing in mind the topic's complexity and the heterogeneity of the audiences probably receiving it. Rather, they should contribute to encourage unequivocal reflection, avoiding skewed visions of the issue (Vega, 1996). Moreover, problems can arise from the inappropriate media treatment of drugs, insofar as

campaigns seem to serve more as a political justification than as a real commitment to the problem of drug abuse, for they normally respond to very specific moments, without forming part of a broader strategy. On many occasions, campaigns become an 'institutional ritual' repeated on a yearly basis, more interested in highlighting the public administration's concern about drug abuse than in achieving very clear-cut goals. It is curious that the assessment of campaign results tends to focus on whether or not citizens recall the message and on their knowledge of the institution responsible which has 'a desire and need to build its image' (Vega Fuente, 1995, p. 104).

As can be seen, there is some agreement that the mere fact of informing the community about the negative effects of drug abuse is not in itself an effective approach. Indeed, the accent is placed on the importance of the social setting when trying to prevent the problem and to avoid its serious consequences for people who have already started to take drugs. This raises the challenge of a more complex communication treatment that goes beyond simply appealing to the sense of responsibility of potential drug users for the sake of an alleged democracy. In light of the foregoing, one of the greatest challenges facing drug abuse prevention campaigns is that of clearly emphasising the negative effects of this abuse, without forgetting the importance of the social setting in which it occurs. This consideration also calls for respecting the integrity of drug users, without stigmatising or discriminating against them.

However, this begs the question of who devises, plans and implements public policies and how these are reflected in the media. In this sense, for a public problem to be regarded as such by the state, it should have a solution. The public issues that these political policies resolve are characterised by their moral and cognitive dimensions which allocate political and causal responsibilities that make it possible to assign roles when tackling them. The construction of a problem is thus a political exercise that is mediated by ideas that compete among themselves and implies ascribing values, images and/or stereotypes to people and events (Cunial, 2015; Spector & Kitsuse 2009; Stone 2002).

3. Other forms of institutional politics

Recent research has approached the drug abuse issue from the perspective of political economy, i.e. in terms of costs and benefits (Kostelnik & Skarbek, 2012). There are also other approaches focusing on the impact that US anti-drug policies have had on Latin America (Tokatlian, 2010). Nonetheless, there is still very little research that has analysed the problem from the perspective of democracy theory or which have inquired into how states react to conflictive issues, without recognising legal subjects –regardless of whether they take drugs or not. And even less attention has been paid to the relationship between these prohibitionist public policies and democratic institutional politics in Latin America.

It should be noted that public policies result from a decision-making process that involves a large number of political actors who interact in a variety of scenarios (Scartascini, 2015), making allowances for the political and institutional contexts in which they move and how these affect decision-making that is supposedly rational (Hall & Lamont, 2013). In this connection, mainstream Latin American politics has been firmly based on criminal law and the use of the prison system to punish the possession of illegal substances –irrespective of the amount or the circumstances– which has led to the criminalisation of consumers and to the lack of rehabilitation policies or the severe undermining of existing ones.

In Chile, since the end of the 1980s, the discourse on the dangers facing drug users in situations of poverty and/or vulnerability is the cornerstone on which the prohibitionist and repressive public policy model has rested. Even though this model was predominant in Latin America, in the past few years some countries have steered a new political course by introducing discursive modifications whose purpose is to transform the criminalising ideology that goes hand in glove with drug addiction (Vásquez, 2014).

An example of this is Argentina's National Mental Health Act which provides for specific alternatives, such as the human rights approach aimed at reducing the discrimination and stigmatisation suffered by drug users. One of its objectives is

To ensure the right to the protection of the mental health of all persons and the full enjoyment of human rights of the mentally ill located in the national territory, recognised in international instruments of human rights, with constitutional status, without prejudice to the most favourable regulations for the protection of these rights that the

provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires may establish (Ley Nacional de Salud Mental, 2010, Art. 1).

In other words, the Argentine state stipulates that the country's public and private health services should follow the aforementioned principles. Additionally, it suggests that not being identified with or discriminated against for a current or previous mental illness is also a right (Ley Nacional de Salud Mental, 2010, Arts. 4 and 7).

Similarly, since 2009, Brazil has begun to implement other health strategies in the framework of the Single Health System (SUS) as a result of the huge increase in crack use. This has led to the creation of 'street clinics' (*consultórios na rua*) in which an attempt is being made to incorporate the HR paradigm, integrating it with state policies and the health sector (De Paulo Souza, 2007).

This clinical-political scheme or perspective is based on territorial actions that seek to care for drug-takers, with emphasis on rehabilitation and social reintegration not only as regards health, but also education, employment and income. This official aspect of public policy is believed to be important for improving the level of autonomy of drug-takers and their families, resorting less to repressive measures in terms of human rights (Brazil, 2003, p. 11).

The aim of HR is to guarantee healthcare while respecting human rights as a principle of integration, instead of geographical and social exclusion, not only for drug-takers, but also for their immediate circle in order to foster listening and participation.

A drug policy grounded in public health has two main requirements: firstly, an understanding of the determining factors in welfare; and, secondly, that of the drugs themselves and mitigating the different expressions of the problem posed by them, which also requires a knowledge of the most effective ways of tackling it. Evidently, the drug problem is associated with indicators of social and economic disadvantage. Furthermore, it should be recalled that while states implement policies that give priority to clamping down on supply, the organisations that profit from the consumption of psychoactive substances employ aggressive market strategies that increase consumption and social vulnerability (Scopetta & Castaño, 2017; Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003).

In Ecuador, for instance, Article 362 of the 2008 Constitution establishes, "Addictions are a public health problem. It is the responsibility of the State to develop co-ordinated alcohol, tobacco and psychotropic and narcotic substance information, prevention and control programmes; as well as offering occasional, habitual and problem drug users treatment and rehabilitation. Under no circumstances should they be criminalised or their constitutional rights be violated" (Ramírez, 2017).

The challenge for international bodies –and for states– is to strike the right balance between combating and prosecuting the trafficking of drugs or psychoactive substances without violating human rights, especially the safety and dignity of citizens, in the development of individual freedoms envisaged both in domestic legislation and international instruments, as set out in the report, "Scenarios for the Drug Problem in the Americas 2013–2025," by the Scenario Team appointed by the Organisation of American States (hereinafter, OAS) (2012, p. 30). This is how the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) understands this balance between human rights and the prosecution of these offences as one of its principal concerns (Iregui *et al.*, 2017).

It is important to note that this involves employing a complex approach due to the way in which drug policy has been designed and developed. It also implies a change in discourse on three fronts: (a) the direct relationship between the right to health and public health policy; (b) redefining criminal offences and decriminalisation; and (c) the differential approach (Iregui *et al.*, 2017).

In sum, according to Chapter 5 (Drugs and Security) of the OAS' report, "The Drug Problem in the Americas: Studies," it is possible to claim that the drug problem poses a threat to the overall physical-individual, patrimonial, psycho-social, health, community and environmental security of the citizens of the Americas:

Any time there is a lack of security in any of these six dimensions, it is always preceded by obstacles to access to education, health, formal employment and justice, which by definition constitutes impediments to the exercise of one or more of the human rights, i.e. political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Similarly, insecurity linked to drugs, which are subject to supply and demand on the informal market, is always preceded by mass violations of one or more of the 58 human rights enshrined in international conventions, which have been ratified by the states of the region. Accordingly, when people exercise these human rights more frequently, it helps to increase social capital and strengthen the social prevention systems of the citizens of the Americas against insecurity that adversely affects many facets of their lives (OAS, 2012, p. 11).

Another important point is the relationship between these policies that seek to control drug taking and the violation of human rights, since it does not only affect users, but also those who do not consume but might be regarded as suspects by the police or judiciary. This is how the OAS' 2012 report, "The Drug Problem in the Americas," sees the problem:

When drug use is criminalized or stigmatized, the population groups that are most vulnerable to problem use find themselves constrained from receiving timely information and from seeking out both public health services and prevention and treatment programs. Prohibition hides the reality of drug dependence from the community and from appropriate service providers, rather than making it more transparent and thus more able to be addressed in a timely way to prevent further personal, family, and community deterioration. Drug use can therefore be considered both a consequence and a cause of social exclusion. On the one hand, drug use can lead to a considerable deterioration in living conditions; on the other, marginalization may be a determining factor in problem drug use (p. 71-72).

In view of the foregoing, problem drug users are excluded from everyday spaces, socio-emotional areas, spheres of social integration and even drug dependence treatment programmes (OAS, 2012). Public issues are characterised by their moral and cognitive dimensions which allocate political and causal responsibilities that make it possible to assign roles when tackling them. The construction of a problem is thus a political exercise that is mediated by ideas that compete among themselves and implies ascribing values, images and/or stereotypes to people and events (Spector & Kitsuse, 2009; Stone 2002).

4. Chile and its anti-drug policy

In Chile, the public debate is currently revolving around the question of what role the state should play in tackling the problem of drug abuse. Specifically, this has worsened in spite of the restrictive policies that, for example, were implemented in 2008, when cannabis and its derivatives were included on the list of "narcotic or psychotropic substances or drugs, producing physical or psychic dependence, capable of causing serious toxic effects or considerable damage to health," according to Article 1 of Chilean Law No. 20,000, which penalises drug trafficking. This list also includes hard drugs like cocaine, opium and heroin (Art. 1, Law 20,000). However, and as was the case in some Western countries, it was not until the 1980s when a specific social construct of the drug problem began to emerge. As with many other topics causing social alarm, it managed to drum up plenty of political and social support, a phenomenon that has been documented by different researchers (Becerra, 2009; Fernández, 2011). Nonetheless, despite the fact that the drug problem has historical precedents –like, for instance, the wanton consumption of psychoactive substances, such as opium, morphine and

cocaine, in the major cities during the 1920s and 1930s (Fernández, 2011)– the truth is that the drug phenomenon was never seen as such a great threat as to be defined and addressed as a state problem (CONACE, 1993; Sepúlveda, 2015).

According to the “2015 Drug Use in the Americas” report released by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD-OAS), Chile registered the highest level of cocaine and cannabis use among the school population at a regional level, while also being the country with the highest annual incidence in coca paste use and the second in inhalant consumption among the school population at a South American level.

Nevertheless, different organisations, foundations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are searching for an institutional solution that makes it legally possible to create controlled spaces for consumption, thus eroding the power of the drug cartels, an approach that is closer to the welfare paradigm.

With regard to the recent history of drug abuse prevention in Chile, the National Council for Narcotics Control (hereinafter, CONACE) was created in 1990. This institution, a legal entity under the aegis of the President of the Republic, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, sought to consolidate its position as a decentralised public service whose aim was to reduce drug consumption and trafficking, with all the necessary human, technical and financial resources to undertake this mission (Estrategía Nacional sobre Drogas 2009–2018, p. 40). Until the 1990s, there had been no public or mental health policies addressing the drug problem. The steps that had been taken were solely aimed at combating drug trafficking and penalising the possession and consumption of illicit substances (CONACE, 2003).

Another important milestone was the creation of the National Service for the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Drug and Alcohol Use (hereinafter, SENDA) on 21 February 2011, during the term of office of the ex-president Sebastián Piñera, with an eye to reforming the old CONACE. The legal mission of this service was to implement drug, psychotropic substance and alcohol abuse prevention policies, on the one hand, and those relating to the treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of problem users, on the other, in addition to developing a national alcohol abuse strategy (Estrategía Nacional sobre Drogas 2009–2018).

Nowadays, decades after the formulation of the National Drug Prevention and Control Policy and Plan (CONACE, 1993), even though significant progress have been made in the so-called ‘WOD’ (for example, institution building, greater public investment, broader programme coverage, consolidating an integrated information system, etc.), the truth is that the drug-free society that all governments have strived to achieve is not still only a distant goal but a chimera. Indeed, the statistics gathered by the Government itself, through a series of population studies exploring drug use performed as from the 1990s, show a clear upward trend—except in the case of coca base use (Sepúlveda & Drove, 2015).

5. Research objectives and questions

The general aim of this study is to analyse the discourse of the drug abuse prevention campaigns launched by the Chilean state over the past decade (2004–2014), while its specific objectives are as follows:

- O1: To determine whether the discourse of drug abuse prevention campaigns in Chile is prohibitionist or welfare-based.
- O2: To identify attitudes or actions associated with illicit drug users in the drug abuse prevention campaigns launched by the Chilean state.
- O3: To determine whether or not there are any differences in the communication approaches to drug abuse employed by the SENDA and the CONACE in the prevention campaigns analysed here.

Specifically, an attempt is made in this paper to answer the following research questions:

- P1: Is the discourse of Chilean drug abuse prevention campaigns prohibitionist or welfare-based and, if so, how is it reproduced?

P2: What attitudes or actions are associated with illicit drug users in the drug abuse prevention campaigns launched by the Chilean state?

P3: Are there any differences in the communication approaches to drug abuse employed by the SENDA and the CONACE in the prevention campaigns analysed here?

6. Method of analysis

In order to answer these questions, a content analysis was performed on the TV spots of the drug abuse prevention campaigns launched by the Chilean state between 2004 and 2014, employing a qualitative methodology of a descriptive and explanatory nature. For the purpose of studying the discursive and ideological elements sustaining the narrative of each campaign and determining whether the discourse was prohibitionist (focusing on the enemy to be combated, i.e. drugs and their users) or welfare-based (concerned about a social reality and the victims who should be helped), a worksheet addressing three main categories was designed: (1) the narrative context; (2) the portrayal of drug users; and (3) the role of the state as regards drug users. On the basis of these three categories, the spots of each campaign were analysed, with a view to linking each narrative element to the presence or absence of the prohibitionist paradigm. Likewise, an attempt was made to confirm whether or not a normative discourse, promoted by the government institutions, predominated.

A population sample including all of the TV campaigns (N = 12) launched by the Chilean state between 2004 and 2014 was used. Due to the need to assess the evolution of public policy in this regard, it was decided to analyse all of the available spots, which will now be described in further detail below.

Table 1: Campaigns.

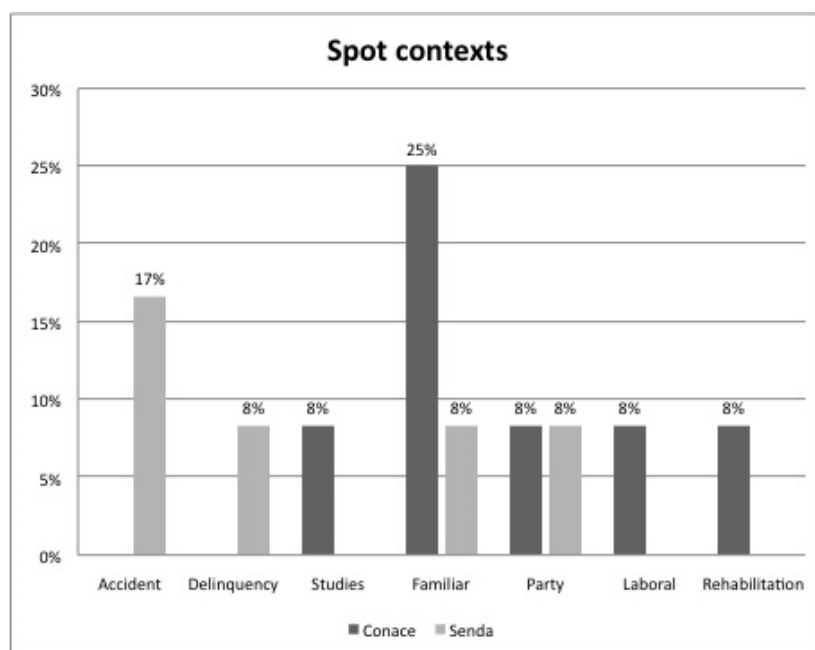
TV Campaigns (2004-2014)		
Year	Campaign	Institution
2007	Campaign "Go out party without bursting yourself," (<i>"Karretear sin reventarte"</i>).	CONACE
2009	Spot 1: "How to make Ice?" (<i>"¿Cómo hacer hielo?"</i>) from the Campaign: "Manual for people under the influence of marijuana," (<i>"Manual para personas bajo la influencia de la marihuana"</i>).	CONACE
2009	Spot 2: "How to get your notebook out of your backpack?," (<i>"¿Cómo sacar tu cuaderno de la mochila?"</i>) from the Campaign "Manual for people under the influence of marijuana."	CONACE
2009	Spot 3: "How to put on the shoes?," (<i>"¿Cómo ponerse las zapatillas?"</i>) from the Campaign "Manual for people under the influence of marijuana."	CONACE
2009	Spot 4, from the "Campaign to prevent the consumption of cocaine." (<i>"Campaña para la prevención del consumo de cocaína"</i>).	CONACE
2009	Spot 4, from the "Campaign to prevent the consumption of cocaine."	CONACE
2010	Campaign "We are here to help you," (<i>"Estamos aquí para ayudarte"</i>).	CONACE
2011	Spot 6 from the Campaign: "The drug affects us all," (<i>"La droga nos afecta a todos"</i>).	SENDA
2011	Spot 7 from the Campaign: "The drug affects us all."	SENDA
2011	Spot 8 from the Campaign: "The drug affects us all."	SENDA
2012	Spot 8 from the Campaign: "The drug affects your family," (<i>"La droga afecta a tu familia"</i>).	SENDA
2012	Spot 8 from the Campaign: "The drug affects your family."	SENDA

7. Results

7.1. *The narrative context*

The data show that the TV spots of the campaigns launched by the Chilean state focused, in the main, on family contexts (CONACE: 25% + SENDA: 8% = 33%). In particular, the stories of the “Manual for people under the effects of cannabis” and the “Cocaine abuse prevention campaign” spots unfold in a mundane context in the homes of drugs users. For their part, the narrative contexts of the “Practice karate without rupturing yourself” and “Cocaine abuse prevention campaign” spots are party- and labour-related, respectively. All the stories of these spots are set in contexts in which people are engaged in everyday activities, either working, studying or enjoying themselves.

Graphic 1: Context of Spots.



Source: Own elaboration (2016).

As to the social stratum, the action of all the spots takes place against middle- and lower-class backdrops. Although they do not contain any reference to the type of family to which users belong, they do indeed allude to the negative consequences that drug abuse has for the members of their families.

The lower-class characters featuring in the spots are chiefly associated with crime. Most notably, the ‘Shop spot’ of the campaign “Drugs affect us all,” features three armed men dressed in overalls –the type of clothing associated with manual labour– identified as coca paste users, robbing a corner shop.

The previous figure shows the context in which the storylines of the CONACE’s spots unfold. This is usually a family setting and/or an accident context –particularly of the traffic kind– thus implying that drug use is harmful and can have grave consequences. The family setting is linked, by and large, to home consumption. Nonetheless, it is also associated with dangerous situations with potentially serious consequences. Similarly, the rest of the spots of the campaigns launched by the SENDA mainly focus on violence. For instance, both campaigns include traffic accidents in order to frame the narrative context. In the case of the campaign “Drugs affect us all,” its three spots recreate a violent situation that frames and justifies the story, whether this be a traffic accident, criminal act or brawl in a party settings. In this

connection, their storylines stand out for their dramatic power, specifically due to the violence featuring in them all.

The most noteworthy of all the spots analysed here is that of the CONACE's campaign "We are here to help you" (2009), whose action takes place in the context of a rehabilitation programme, with a greater focus on the positive consequences of joining these programmes, rather than on the potentially negative repercussions of drug abuse. The intention is to show, on the one hand, the individual capacity of users to overcome their addiction, in this case illustrated by a group of children and pre-adolescents who, on the whole, are trying to kick their habit. Namely, the state and support networks are portrayed as vital for helping problem drug users. This spot does not focus on the responsibility of consumers, but rather on their ability to choose an alternative. This type of context does not appear in any other campaign analysed here.

7.2. *The portrayal of drug users*

There are a number of common denominators in the portrayal of the problem drug users featuring in the campaign spots of both institutions. Firstly, in the stories that take place at home practically all of the users are young men aged between 17 and 25. In the work-related spots, for their part, most of them are young adults aged between 25 and 35. And as to the party-related spots, they are working adults also aged between 25 and 35, with the purchasing power to consume in a bar or in other leisure settings. In relation to the accents of all of the drug users featuring in the campaigns, it is impossible to identify any common denominator because in the SENDA's it is the victims who tell the story and in the CONACE's voice-overs are usually used.

Concerning the characterisations of drug users featuring in the spots analysed here there are certain differences between the CONACE and the SENDA, each institution employing different ones. As to the former, drug users are, by and large, portrayed as being incapacitated (33%), 'influencers' of drug abuse (17%) or in rehabilitation (8%). Whereas in the case of the latter, they are usually depicted as being violent (17%), criminal (17%) or sick (8%). The characteristics of each one of these images or categories will now be discussed below in the same order.

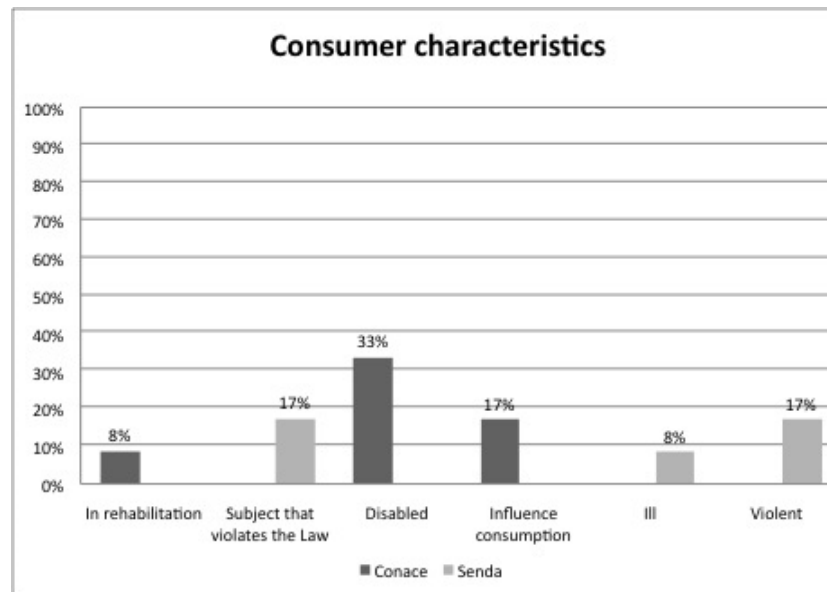
Firstly, incapacitated drug users (33%) cannot and do not do anything under the immediate effects of consumption, which prevents them from undertaking the simplest of daily tasks as per usual. For example, the "Practice karate without rupturing yourself" campaign spot highlights the effects of cannabis on a young man drinking at a party, while in the "Manual for people under the effects of cannabis" spot, the inability of a student to do something as simple as tying his own shoelaces or getting a book out of his rucksack is parodied. This characterisation focuses on the physical and psychological effects of consumption, to wit, on its impact on the health of users. In other words, users are associated with a flaw, weakness or incapacity and, subsequently, with notions such as lack of intelligence, failure, immaturity, etc.

Secondly, influencers of drug abuse (17%) try to convince others to consume. This is the case with the "Cocaine abuse prevention campaign." Even though the main character does not directly offer or supply drugs to others, he does indeed ask them to cover for him at work and, to a certain extent, indirectly encourages them to consume. The campaign's approach dispenses with the social considerations on creating the right climate for promoting drug abuse prevention, focusing on those who have already begun to consume.

Violent drugs users (17%) and those who break the law (17%) come in joint third place. The former are involved in accidents or brawls resulting from drug use. This has far-reaching consequences for their social circles, above all for those who do not consume. The latter commit offences, with or without resorting to violence, and are responsible for unlawful actions.

Bringing up the rear, in joint fifth place, are the characterisations less frequently represented in the spots analysed here. They are sick people (8%), victims of drug abuse, and addicts in rehabilitation (8%) with a possibility of rebuilding their lives. This last portrayal can be found, for instance, in the ‘We are here to help you’ campaign spot which shows the transformation undergone by a boy who has stopped smoking cannabis. Once rehabilitated, he is presented as a capable person, with the possibility of acting positively and creatively influencing his peers through his example.

Graphic 2: Characterization of the consumer in campaigns.



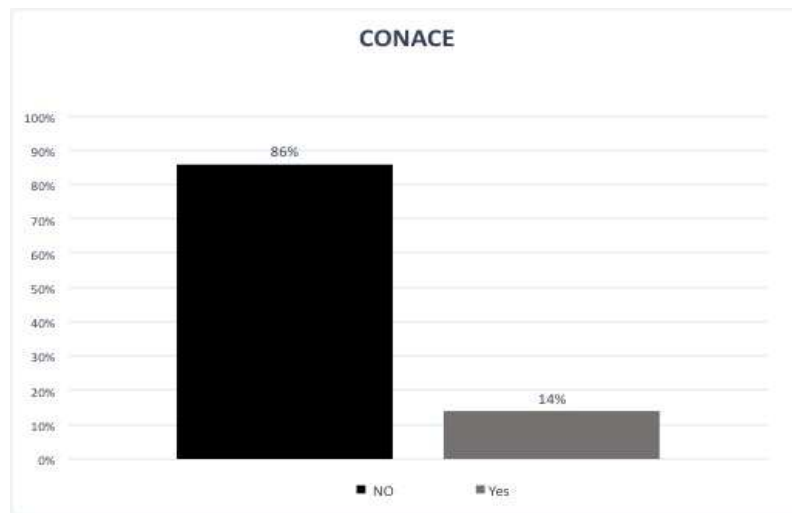
Source: Own elaboration (2016).

7.3. *The role of the state as regards drug users*

In all the spots analysed here, only those of the CONACE’s campaigns allude to the role of the state in their narratives (14%). For its part, the SENDA does not specifically mention the state’s efforts regarding drug abuse prevention. By and large, there is no reference to the state as an actor in the process of drug use, prevention and rehabilitation, notwithstanding the fact that the campaigns are designed with that in mind. Although the spots are state-sponsored and refer to how to qualify for support programmes, they do not present the state as an actor that triggers or resolves conflicts.

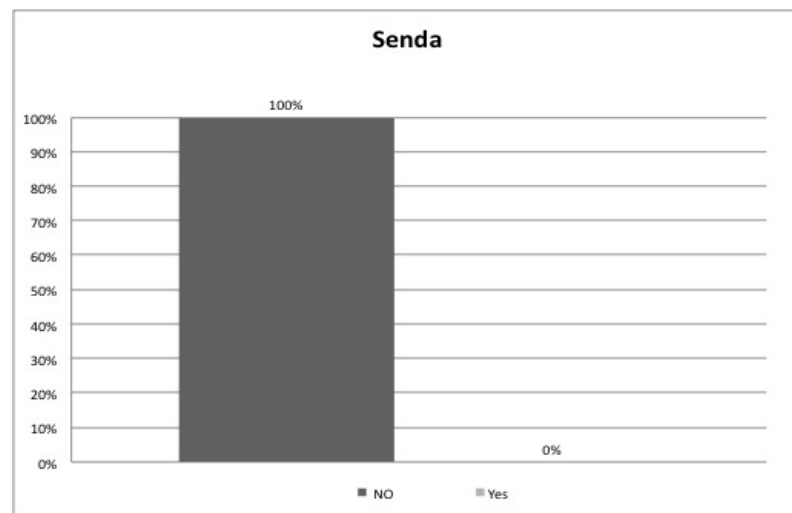
In 14% of the CONACE’s spots, the state can be identified in the narrative as an “enemy of violence” and as an institution that controls drug abuse. That said, this vision of the state is infrequent and underdeveloped, which means that they fail to get the message across that it is the state’s duty to prevent drug abuse and/or rehabilitate users. The only exception to the rule is its campaign “We are here to help you,” in which the role that the state can play in the rehabilitation of addicts, particularly the youngest ones, is indeed represented.

Graphic 3: Results on the presence of the State in CONACE.



Source: Own elaboration (2016).

Graphic 4: Results on the presence of the State in SENDA.



Source: Own elaboration (2016).

8. Discussion

The SENDA was created in 2011, as a service depending on the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Safety, to replace the CONACE, the former multi-ministry council that had hitherto designed and implemented state policies on illicit drug trafficking and use and had provided a service fully dedicated to drug abuse and rehabilitation.

This institutional change, however, did not lead to a different communication approach in the drug abuse prevention campaign spots broadcast on free-to-air television, as evidenced by the results of the analysis performed here. Quite the contrary, while the “Manual for people under the effects of cannabis” campaign (CONACE, 2009) focused on the negative impact of drugs on the performance of school children consuming cannabis, the “Drugs affect us all” campaign (SENDA, 2011) concentrated on the effects of drug abuse on non-consumers, such as their involvement, for example, in violent and bloody encounters due to the irresponsible acts of users.

In light of the results, the way of portraying consumption in the 'Manual for people under the effects of cannabis' campaign reproduced yet again the prohibitionist discourse, inasmuch as it associated consumption with the incapacity of drug-takers to lead a normal life in society. In this sense, the messages of the spots of the SENDA's campaigns were decidedly prohibitionist, for drug users were not only portrayed as being socially dysfunctional, but also as people who any 'normal' citizen would prefer to keep at arm's length because of the risk of being involved in violent situations. In this regard, it could be held that the campaign messages did not evolve at all after the creation of the SENDA, but rather consolidated a remarkably prohibitionist approach to the problem.

9. Conclusions

In view of the analysis performed here, it can be concluded that the media treatment of public policies on illicit drugs in Chile between 2004 and 2014 offered a reductionist vision of the issue. As a matter of fact, it can be claimed that the narrative contexts used tended to conceal the problem's complexity. In this respect, such simplistic and stereotyped discourses prevent citizens from gaining a better understanding of drug abuse as a social reality.

With respect to the first research question as to whether the discourse of drug abuse prevention campaigns in Chile is prohibitionist or welfare-based, the spots analysed here contain certain aspects that allow us to affirm that it is more the former than the latter.

The first of these had to do with representing the state as a prime mover in the WOD and in controlling drug abuse. The second involved highlighting drug users as the target audience of the messages conveyed. But neither were they given voice nor were they asked how they had ended up in such a desperate situation. Ergo, despite being the affected parties or main actors, they were actually ignored in the external view that was offered of the problem. The third aspect lumped together drug users, without recognising the diverse realities of consumption or the causes or circumstances behind it. The aim of the fourth was to achieve a greater impact by linking drug use to violent and bloody encounters, without explaining other contextual elements. Additionally, in the drug abuse prevention campaigns analysed here there was no reference whatsoever to other approaches to the problem, for example, HR or the possibility of responsible consumption. This had to do, furthermore, with the fact that consumption was classified independently of the substance being discussed. In this respect, there were no significant differences in the treatment given to cannabis versus any other drug, all the characterisations being similar.

As to the attitudes or actions with which illicit drug users were associated in the drug abuse prevention campaigns launched by the Chilean state –i.e. the second research question– the central message could not be clearer: problem drug users were directly related to acts of violence and incapacity, meaning that they posed a potential risk to the established social order. The campaign spots analysed here associated drug users with negative social situations, such as violence, crime and their diminished physical and cognitive abilities, the bad influence that they had in work settings, etc. Moreover, the campaigns did not offer any explanation for the causes behind drug use and, rather than delving into the problem's complexity, only offered a biased vision focusing on users. Thus, the spots gave rise to a dual culpability. On the one hand, drug users were portrayed as being primarily responsible for the consequences of consumption, without there being any mention of the social or cultural circumstances underlying the phenomenon. And on the other, it was suggested that drugs were fully responsible for creating dysfunctional people, incapable of leading 'normal' lives, since they converted them into marginal, violent and sick individuals. In short, the underlying causes of the social conflict stemming from problem drug use were 'disguised,' placing the blame for any negative consequences fully on users.

In relation to the third research question, it can be assumed that the results of the analysis show that, although the communication approaches of the SENDA and the CONACE

differed to a certain extent, neither were there any significant divergences nor did they offer an alternative to the prohibitionist discourse. In spite of the fact that the SENDA's campaigns, for instance, tended to be designed to achieve a large impact and greater media coverage, their discourse was still explicitly prohibitionist, even going so far as to link drug use categorically to violence, crime and bloody encounters. As to the characterisations appearing in the spots, albeit different, they were all negative and stereotyped and no attempt was made to inquire into the causes, contexts or reasons behind consumption. Although 8% the characters featuring in the CONACE's campaign spots were in rehabilitation, this was not enough to underscore the alternatives to consumption or to enhance any positive aspect. As to historical progression, no significant differences can be observed in the data. Rather, the drug abuse prevention campaigns had a marked tendency towards resorting to violence, crime and the users' diminished physical and cognitive capacity.

In a nutshell, no significant change can be observed in the communication approaches implemented by the SENDA and the CONACE during the study time frame. The prohibitionist vision was a constant during this period, with a total lack of information on how to limit the effects of drug abuse, and much less on the possibility of responsible consumption. Furthermore, rather than placing the spotlight on the problem's public health dimension, the campaigns of both institutions tended to focus more on violence as a result of drug abuse, which had to be avoided and which justified prohibitionist policies.

Lastly, the communication strategy of the Chilean state, reflected in its communication campaigns, should not be understood as resistance to the ongoing debate on drug policies, but rather as a denial of the possibility of such a debate, since it did not recognise other actors and limited the discussion to the approaches implemented by the bodies tasked with prosecuting and restricting consumption, without even considering the alleged rationales sustaining its arguments.

In essence, the results obtained in this study do not differ from those of other previous studies (CEPCA, 2003; Congil, 2004; Vega, 1983) performed on the relationship between the media and their portrayal of drug users. They have all demonstrated that the media give preference to certain sources, criminalising information and giving more relevance to some topics than to others (crime, drug trafficking and insecurity being the principal ones), and that their corporate discourse tends to revolve around the problem's social, legal and health aspects.

The burning issues of the drug debate in Latin America have included, on the one hand, the spread of organised crime and the growing territorial and political lobbying power of the drug cartels. And on the other, the public health problem associated with the indiscriminate consumption of a part of the population. Nevertheless, the ongoing debate in Chile and on the continent has to meet a new challenge: politics. After decades of accommodating itself to the US agenda, with questionable results, which has led to the debate to which reference is made here, the region needs a public drug abuse prevention policy, devised and planned by the citizens themselves, that addresses local dynamics and requirements. At the same time, this poses a huge communication challenge, namely, to open a debate that respects differences of opinion that recognises responsible consumption and drug users as valid actors in the public debate, that does not impose points of view and that is open to mutual collaboration with civic organisations and groups. In sum, a debate that leads to a legislation with the necessary legitimacy to be enforced.

This paper has been written in the framework of the DICYT project (031596VV) "Evolución de las políticas públicas del Estado de Chile sobre drogas ilícitas: Campañas de prevención y tratamiento en los diarios nacionales" funded by the Dirección de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica, de la Vicerrectoría de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile, of which Salomé Sola-Morales, PhD, is a co-researcher and Carla Quiroz is research assistant.

References

- Arfurch, L., Chaves, N. & Ledesma, M. (1997). *Diseño y comunicación. Teorías y enfoques críticos*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Barra, A. & Zamudio, C. (2015, March 9). La Salud pública y el consumo problemático de sustancias legales e ilegales. Retrieved from http://www.espolea.org/uploads/8/7/2/7/8727772/mesa_2-acciones_de_salud_pblica.pdf
- Bedoya, M. (2016). La lucha contra las drogas: fracaso de una guerra, comienzo de una nueva política. *Drugs and Addictive Behavior*, 1(2), 237-254.
- Bourgois, P. (2002). El poder de la violencia en la guerra y la paz. *Apuntes de Investigación del CECyP*, VI(88), 73-98.
- Brasil (2003). *A política do Ministério da Saúde para atenção integral a usuários de álcool e outras drogas. Série E, Legislação de Saúde*. Brasília: Ministério de Saúde.
- Cunial, S. (2018). Políticas públicas sobre cuestiones morales conflictivas: el caso de la despenalización del consumo de drogas en Argentina. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 47, 123-149. <https://www.doi.org/10.21308/recp.47.05>
- Cunial, S. (2015). El uso de drogas ilegales como asunto de política pública en Argentina. *Revista Perspectivas de Políticas Públicas*, 4(8), 165-195.
- Dammert, L. (2009). Drogas e inseguridad en América Latina: Una relación compleja. *Nueva Sociedad*, 222, 112-131.
- De Paula Souza, T. (2007). Redução de danos no Brasil: a clínica e a política em movimento, Dissertação de Mestrado, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia do Departamento de Psicologia, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro.
- Del Olmo, R. (1993). Para definir el tráfico y consumo de droga. Reflexiones iniciales. *Delito y sociedad*, 1(5), 127-131.
- Cassetti F. & Di Chio F. (1990). *Cómo analizar un film*. España: Paidós.
- CEPCA (2003). Las conductas adictivas en la prensa de Ibiza y Formentera. Not published.
- Congil, T., Iruretagoiena, O., Mendiola, M., Simón, B., Suarez, M., Serrano, U., Arza, J. & Olabeaga, P. (2004). *Estudio sobre el tratamiento de la prensa del País Vasco del fenómeno de las drogodependencias en las décadas de los 80 y 90*. Hernani: Askagintza.
- Consejo Nacional para el Control de Estupefacientes (CONACE) (2009). *Estrategia nacional sobre drogas 2009-2018*. Santiago: Ministerio del Interior, Gobierno de Chile.
- Epele, M. (2007). La lógica de la sospecha. Sobre la criminalización del uso de drogas, complots y barreras de acceso al sistema de salud. *Cuadernos de Antropología Social*, 25, 153-170.
- Epele, M. (2002). Violencias y traumas: Políticas del Sufrimiento Social entre Usuaris de Drogas. *Cuadernos de Antropología Social*, 14, 117-137.
- Espinoza, J. & Íñiguez, L. (2017). Mujeres peligrosas: Prácticas discursivas del Estado chileno en relación con la prostitución, el comercio sexual y el trabajo sexual. *Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Sociales*, 8(2), 388-411.
- Foucault, M. (2006). *Seguridad, territorio y población*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- García Canclini, N. (2002). La reinención de lo público en la videocultura urbana. *Revista de antropología Social*, 11, 135-154.
- García, F. (1996). Influencia y efectos de los medios. La creación de estereotipos sobre droga. *Acciones e investigaciones sociales*, 4, 181-200.
- Gutiérrez, A. (2009). *Una exploración genealógica de La guerra contra las drogas. Desentrañando el derecho penal del enemigo*. Costa Rica: Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio.
- Hall, P. & Michéle L. (2013). *Social resilience in the neoliberal era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://www.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139542425>

- Iregui-Parra, P. M., Palacios-Sanabria, M. T., Torres-Villarreal, M. L., Moreno, S. S. & Triana-Ancinez, B. (2017). *El Consumo de Drogas en Colombia: Una Reflexión desde el Derecho Internacional de los Derechos Humanos*. Bogotá: Cede, Universidad de los Andes.
- Kornblit, A. & Verón, E. (1989). *La construcción social del problema: los medios de comunicación y las drogas. Estudios sobre drogadicción en Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.
- Kostelnik, J. & David S. (2012). The governance institutions of a drug trafficking organization, *Public Choice*, 156, 95-103. <https://www.doi.org/10.1007/s11127-012-0050-x>
- Lamont, M., Stefan B. & Matthew C. (2014). What is missing? Cultural processes and causal pathways to inequality, *Socio-Economic Review*, 12(3), 573-608. <https://www.doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwu011>
- Ledesma, M. d. V. (1999). Diseño gráfico ¿un orden necesario? In L. Arfuch, N. Chaves Nogales & M. d. V. Ledesma (Eds.), *Diseño y Comunicación. Teoría y enfoques críticos* (pp. 61-67). Madrid: Paidós.
- Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo, España (1987). *Plan nacional sobre drogas. Memoria 1986*. Madrid: Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo. Delegación del Gobierno para el Plan Nacional sobre Drogas.
- Miranda, Ó. & Iglesias, Á. (2015). 'Agenda-setting' de medios en la guerra contra las drogas. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 21(1), 403-420.
- Núñez, P. (1990). Comunicación social y drogas. Ponencia en Seminario Internacional "La droga en América Latina". Quito.
- OEA (2012). *Escenarios para el problema de drogas en las Américas 2013-2025*. Cartagena de Indias: Organización de los Estados Americanos.
- Parvex, R. (1996). Educación e Información. Ponencia en "Conferencia Internacional de drogas: Dependencia/Interdependencia". Lisboa, 23-25 de marzo.
- Ramírez, L. (2017). Debate drogas: nuevas ideas y actores. *Desafíos*, 29(2), 329-352.
- Rementería, I. (2009). La guerra de las drogas: Cien años de crueldad y fracasos sanitarios. *Nueva Sociedad*, 22, pp. 70-80.
- Scalia, P. (2012). Prohibicionismo, grupos sociales "a riesgo" y autoritarismo institucional. *Polis*, 11, 1-23. Retrieved from <http://polis.revues.org/5783>
- SENDA, (2014). *Glosario de Términos*. Chile: Ministerio del Interior. Retrieved from <http://www.senda.gob.cl/prevencion/informacion-sobre-drogas/glosario-de-terminos/>
- Sepúlveda, M. A. (2015). Gubernamentalidad y riesgo en el campo de las drogas: análisis de las prácticas de gobierno en Chile posdictatorial. *Universitas Psychologica*, 14(5), 1707-1722. <https://www.doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy14-5.grcd>
- Spector, M. & Kitsuse, J. (2009). *Constructing social problems*. Washington: Transaction Publishers.
- Stone, D. (2002). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision-Making*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Tokatlian, J. (2010). La "guerra antidrogas" y el Comando Sur: una combinación delicada, *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica*, 10(1), 43-47.
- Vega, A. (1996). *La acción social ante las drogas: Propuestas de intervención socioeducativa*. Madrid: Narcea.
- Vega, F. (1995). Los medios de comunicación social y las drogas. *Revista Española de drogodependencias*, 2(20), 99-111.
- Verón, E. (1987). *Construir el acontecimiento*. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.
- Vitale, A. (2015). Políticas de drogas, control social y regulación en la sociedad del riesgo. Análisis sobre nuevos dispositivos sociales en Uruguay. In B. García Gallegos (Ed.), *Drogas, policías y delincuencia: otras miradas a la seguridad ciudadana en América Latina* (pp. 215-235). Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Wolton, D. (2007). *Pensar la comunicación*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.