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Transitional Justice Processes, Shared Narrative Memory about Past Collective Violence and Reconciliation

The Case of the Chilean “Truth and Reconciliation” and “Political Imprisonment and Torture” Commissions

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Abstract

Perceptions of the “Truth and Reconciliation” and “Political Imprisonment and Torture” commissions and related beliefs, emotions and socio-emotional climate were analyzed in population affected and unaffected by past political violence in Chile (N=1278). Those with a positive evaluation of commissions’ goal of creation of an inclusive narrative, by comparison to people that disagree report higher negative emotions such as shame, as well as positive ones such as pride and hope by respect to collective past, agree more with social forgiveness, stress more learning of past collective misdeeds, perceives a more positive emotional climate, intergroup trust, confidence in institutions – however they did not share more universalistic values. A positive evaluation of the commissions’ goal of helps to prevent violence, supports justice and to know the truth about past collective violence, low exposure to past political violence, low negative emotions and high positive emotions predict positive socio-emotional climate in multiple regression analyses. Results suggest that commissions play a relatively successful role as transitional justice rituals, reinforcing reconciliation, but that the creation of an inclusive narrative or shared collective memory is less successful and less relevant that the preventive, helps to justice and to know the truth TC’s functions

Key words

Truth and Reconciliation Commission; political attitudes; social sharing; emotional climate; inclusive narrative; collective memory; reconciliation.

INTRODUCTION

Traumatic events, and in particular collective violence, entail long-term effects on political attitudes (Laufer & Solomon, 2011), on personal emotions (Punamaki, 2011), on social beliefs (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and on collective emotional orientation or emotional climate (De Rivera & Paez, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin & de Rivera, 2007). To illustrate, a powerful emotional climate of sadness, fear and anxiety persisted in Chile for years after general Augusto Pinochet seized power in 1973, killing a thousand people and putting in a jail hundred thousand (De Rivera, 1992). People were afraid because everyone knew that it

would be dangerous to formulate certain things in public. Even people with rightist “politically correct” attitudes knew that they had to be cautious, because the police sometimes made “mistakes”. Such an atmosphere heavily affected emotional relationships within the country. People could neither speak about their relatives who had disappeared nor publicly state their political opinions. The ubiquitous fear resulted in social isolation. It prevented people from knowing the state of mind of those around them and precluded the organization of a political opposition against the regime. This negative emotional climate prevailed until the end of the dictatorship (De Rivera & Páez, 2007) and entails negative effects nowadays – people affected by repressions perceives a less positive emotional climate more than 20 years after the fall of Pinochet (Cárdenas, Páez, Rimé, Bilbao, Arnoso & Asún, 2012).

Truth commissions (TC) and official apologies are supposed to overcome the negative impact of past collective violence, promoting intergroup empathy and trust, forgiveness and reinforce instrumental and socio-emotional reconciliation (Blatz, Schuman & Ross, 2009; Cehajic, Brown & Castano, 2008; Nadler, Malloy & Fisher, 2008). The present study intends to examine existing associations between social beliefs, attitudes and emotions and their attitude towards transitional justice reparatory activities related to the military dictatorship repression, which occurred in Chile from 1973 to 1989. This chapter focuses particularly in the role of shared inclusive narrative of the past in restoring political culture and fueling reconciliation.

TC has been established in many countries in order to address human rights violations by dictatorship regimes or those resulting from internal armed conflict. Since the 1970s, more than fifty official commissions have been established throughout the world (Hayner, 2001; Avruch, 2010). Common TC functions are: a) making efforts to discover the truth about the period of collective violence, b) recognizing and validating victims’ suffering, c) compensating those affected both materially and symbolically, d) seeking justice, e) avoiding new acts of violence, and f) contributing to the creation of an inclusive collective memory oriented to the future. These functions may contribute to the avoidance of revenge cycles and further war crimes, at the same time as preventing collective violence from arising again (Sikkink & Booth Walling, 2007).

Two “Truth Commissions” (TCs) were created in Chile for the purpose of documenting facts of collective violence provoked by Pinochet’s dictatorship. The aim of the so called “Rettig Commission” or National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) in 1991 was to provide a picture, as complete as possible, of one of the most severe human rights violations perpetrated by state agents. Its purpose was to collect information so as to identify individual victims (people detained or disappeared, political prisoners executed, and people tortured to death), to discover their fate, to propose compensation measures for their families, and to recommend legal and administrative measures for preventing future human rights violations (NCTR, 1991).

The so called “Valech Commission” or National Commission for Political Prison and Torture (NCPPT) was created to identify people who, without being killed, were imprisoned and tortured by state agents for political reasons (NCPPT, 2004), and to propose compensation measures for them. The reports of these two commissions were published by the

President of the Republic in 1991 and in 2004 respectively. The President headed the petition for institutional apologies for the perpetrated abuse. The NCTR and NCPPT jointly established that more than 3000 deaths had occurred for political reasons in Chile, almost all in the hands of the armed forces or of the police (detained-disappeared or executed without trial). In addition, the NCPIT reported more than 27,000 confirmed cases of political imprisonment and/or torture.

As regards social responses to the reports of these TCs opinion studies (CEP, 1991, 2004) showed that citizens regarded them as both necessary and truthful. Yet, people also believed in their majority that they might contribute reopening up past wounds. Most citizens already had knowledge of at least a part of the facts reported and were in favor of compensation measures for victims. Most of them felt emotionally affected by the gravity and cruelty of the events reported. A great majority believed that even after 30 years, the sociopolitical conflict had not been overcome and reconciliation had not been achieved (CERC, 2003, 2004, 2006). As far as justice is concerned, more than 600 trials of agents of the dictatorship were held and most of those responsible for human rights violations were convicted (Lira, 2010).

Following these Commissions, material and symbolic reparatory actions were performed and official apologies expressed successively by two Presidents of Chile, Patricio Aylwin (1990–1995) and Ricardo Lagos (2000–2005). Efficient restorative actions such as these official apologies require them to be perceived as expressing regret and assuming responsibility, being sincere and not as mere justifications or excuses (Staub, 2005). Those who express apology must be representative and must have the support of most of the nationals' group (Kadima & Mullet, 2007). Finally, some studies suggest that after apologies for past collective violence and injustice, members of the victimized group reports more positive attitudes towards out groups and institutions (Blatz & Ross, 2012). Similarly it was suggested that TC's are strongly related to reconciliation than to healing personal emotions (Martin-Beristain, Páez, Rimé & Kanyangara, 2010).

From a psychosocial perspective, reconciliation, that is a broad concept than forgiveness, implies: a) the construction of a common integrative narrative of past collective violence, b) overcoming revenge and negative emotions like anger, fear and sadness, and changing the outgroup image, increasing intergroup trust and forgiveness as well as positive collective emotions like hope; c) increasing confidence in institutions, and d) increasing values of tolerance and universal justice (Gibson, 2004; Nadler, Malloy & Ficher, 2008; Bar-Tal, 2011). Confirming that transitional justice has a positive influence in reconciliation, a longitudinal study show that Rwanda's Gacaca has had positive inter-group effects, such as more positive out-group stereotypes and a less homogeneous ("they are all similar") or more differentiated, individualized view of the ethnic outgroup (Kanyangara et al, 2007; Rimé *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, people who agreed with the past narrative drawn up by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) showed an attitude more favorable to reconciliation, thus confirming that a common collective memory of the past that integrates different views strengthens social cohesion (Gibson, 2004).

The general purpose of the present study was to compare social beliefs, attitudes and emotions between people agreeing and disagreeing with the activities of the NCTR and NCPIT, and among population affected and unaffected by past political violence in Chile. Particularly we should contrast the association between a positive evaluation of Commissions functions and reconciliation, expecting that a favorable perception of the TCs' construction of an integrative narrative will be associated with greater positive emotional impact, higher levels of belief in the sincerity and effectiveness of apologies, attitudes more favorable toward social remembering as strategies for coping with past collective violence, and a more positive evaluation of emotional and social climate: low levels of anger, sadness and fear, high levels of hope, security, intergroup trust, confidence in institutions and agreement with tolerance and universalistic justice values.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 1278 participants, 629 men (49.2%) and 649 women (50.8%), with ages ranging from 18 to 90 years ($M = 39.66$ years and $SD = 17.36$). Data were collected in the country's most populous urban areas: Santiago (26.1%), Valparaíso (30.8%), Concepción (14.4%) and Antofagasta (28.7%). Participants were unqualified blue collars (8.1%), qualified blue collars, white collars (14.9%), executives or self-employed (22.7), retired (4.3), housewife (7.8), students (24.6%), or other (17.6).

PROCEDURE

Interviewers were volunteer university students trained in the application of the scale. A random-route and stratified sample was used to establish appropriate population ratios for sex and different age groups in each city (National Institute of Statistics, 2002). To be included, participants had to sign an "informed consent" letter explaining the study objectives and guaranteeing response anonymity and confidentiality. The ethical criteria of the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT, its acronym in Spanish) were applied. Participants were selected by team members trained in data collection, who worked with a guideline of the features participants were required to report (city, sex, and age group). Once they had agreed to participate in the study, respondents filled out a paper-and-pencil questionnaire individually, having previously reading a text informing them about the NCTR and NCPIT.

Pilot data collection showed that a questionnaire based upon a high number of items was inadequate. Respondents complained of redundancy and expressed boredom. As in other surveys addressing the general population, we opted for a limited number of items with a large content validity, being aware that usually reliabilities of 2-4 items scales are moderate (Gibson, 2004; Davidoof, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008). The questionnaire comprised five sets of variables. Preliminary questions first enquired about respondents' socio-demographic

variables (age, gender, city of residence) and then upon their level of exposure to past collective violence. A second set of questions examined participants' information and attitudes about the National Commissions (NCTR and NCPIT). It involved questions about the respondent's (1) level of information about the activities of each of the two National Commissions, (2) global attitude with respect to these activities, (3) evaluation of these Commissions' outcomes, (4) evaluation of the formal apologies expressed in 1991 by the Chilean President to victims and their families, (5) belief in social forgiveness (6) personal disposition toward social remembering. A third set of scales assessed through two different tools, respondents' perception of the socio-emotional climate of the country. A fourth set addressed more directly participants' personal experience in relation to re-examination of the past and activities of the Commissions by assessing the emotions they felt in this regard, their propensity to express them and to talk about their emotions, as well as the extent to which they refrain from talking. Finally, in a fifth set of measurements, participants' values were examined using Schwartz items on universalism values, values related to a democratic culture of peace. Hereafter, the various instruments just listed are described in a detailed manner.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Socio-demographic information. Respondents answered questions about their age, gender, city of residence and occupation.

Exposure to past violence. This section examined the impact of past collective violence on participants. It included questions aimed at differentiating "direct victims", "indirect victims" and persons "unaffected" by political violence. These categories were derived from respondents' answers to the two following questions: "Do you consider yourself a victim of the violence perpetrated by the state or its agents between 1973 and 1989?" (Yes/No) and "Are there any victims of state violence or its agents between 1973 and 1989 among your family members or close friends?" (Yes/No). Participants who responded affirmatively to the first question or to both questions were categorized as direct victims, those who responded affirmatively only to the second question were considered as indirect victims whereas those who responded negatively to both questions were considered as "unaffected". An additional question enquired about the form of inflicted violence with the following items to be checked: torture; execution or disappearance of a direct family member; political imprisonment; exile; job dismissal for political reasons; violent assault at home. Participants could check as many items as they needed to fit their experience.

INFORMATION AND ATTITUDES ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRUTH COMMISSIONS

Level of information. Participants were asked whether they know about the work of the commissions: "Do you know about the activities on NCTR?" (Yes/No) and "Do you know about the activities of NCPPT?" (Yes/No). As a majority of participants (around 60% see below) did not know about one or both commissions, all participants were invited to read a short summary of facts about the collective violence and the commissions' activities (see introduction).

Global attitude. This scale was adapted from Gibson (2004) and intended to assess respondents' global attitude and evaluation of the commissions' activity using the following

item: “Would you say that you: Strongly approve what the NCTR has done / Somewhat approve/ Somewhat disapprove/ Strongly disapprove”. A similar item was then proposed with regard to the CNPT. In view of the consistency of the answers ($\alpha = .92$), the two items were averaged.

Evaluation of the Commissions’ outcomes. Four major aims of the commissions were then submitted to an evaluation through the following items: «The NCTR is often said to have several important jobs. Would you say that it has done an excellent job/pretty good job/pretty bad job/poor job: (1) “Letting families know what happened to their loved ones” (i.e., aim of providing truth about victims), (2) “Helping to create an inclusive history integrating the ‘two nations’ or opposed groups in a common narrative” (aim of creating a comprehensive history), (3) “Helping that perpetrators would be brought to judgment” (aim of punishment of those who are guilty) and (4) “Ensuring that human rights abuses will not happen again in the country” (aim of guaranteeing that it will not happen again)». Items 1, 3 and 4 were repeated with reference to the NCPPT. Response options ranged from 1 = “Poor job” to 4 = “Excellent job”. A global evaluation index was computed from answers to these 7 items, ($\alpha = .89$).

Evaluation of the State’s apologies. Three questions adopted from Echebarría *et al.* (2010) then assessed respondents’ views on (1) the sincerity of the State’s apology “Do you consider the President’s apology and message about NCTR as sincere”, (2) its effectiveness for improving empathy “Do you consider that the President’s apology and message about NCTR strengthen intergroup empathy, helping to understand other’s suffering”, (3) its effectiveness for promoting inter-group trust “Do you think that the President’s apology and message about NCTR reinforce trust between groups”. The response options ranged in each case from 1 = “Not at all/None” to 4 = “A great deal”. A general index assessing apology sincerity and effectiveness was created. Reliability was satisfactory ($\alpha = .82$).

Belief in social forgiveness. A question was drawn up to assess social forgiveness (Mullet *et al.*, 2011; Kadima & Mullet, 2007): “With respect to the period of past national collective violence, do you consider that people who were affected by past violence can forgive those who inflicted them this violence?” Response options ranged from 1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Completely”.

Disposition to social remembering. Two items (adapted from Gibson, 2004) examined respondents’ respective dispositions to social remembering and to forgetting. “We are interested in your opinion about the following two statements regarding this country’s past”: (1). “When it comes to this nation’s past, we must learn from the mistakes that were made in order to avoid making the same mistake again”; (2) “It’s better not to open old wounds by talking about what happened in the past”. A response scale from “Completely false” (1) to “Completely true” (4) was used.

PERCEIVED SOCIO-EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

Positive Negative Emotional Climate (CEPN). Respondents’ perception of the socio-emotional climate of their country was assessed using two different instruments. First, four items extracted from the Positive Negative Emotional Climate scale (Páez, Ruiz, Gailly,

Kornblit, Wiesenfeld & Vidal, 1997) were used to evaluate the positive (“I think that in general people trust their institutions” and “People manifest solidarity and mutual help, feel solidarity in general”) and negative emotional climate (“I think that in general people feel anger, hostility” and “I think that people feel sadness, apathy”). A Likert-type response scale was used, with anchors 1 = “Not at all/None” to 5 = “A great deal”. Reliabilities were satisfactory for Negative Emotional Climate ($\alpha = .71$) and acceptable for Positive ($\alpha = .61$).

Climate Dimension Scale (CD24). Eight items from the *Climate Dimension Scale* (De Rivera, 2010) were also used to assess the perception of emotional climate. Respondents were asked how far they agreed with the following statements: (1) “People in the country feel secured that there is enough food, water, medicine, and shelter for themselves and their families, and that they will continue having these goods”; (2) “People feel unsafe due to a degree of violence which prevent them to live peacefully”; (3) “People feel that the various political groups in this country trust each other and will work together for the progress of the country”; (4) “People from different political, ethnic and religious groups trust each other in this country”; (5) “People are afraid at the perspective of organizing peaceful public meetings to protest”; (6) “People are afraid of saying what they really think because it could be dangerous”; (7) “People have hope because things in this country are improving”; (8) “Lack of hope in this country is such that many people want to leave”. A Likert-type response scale was used, ranging from 1 = “Total disagreement” to 7 = “Total agreement” (7). A principal component factor analysis on these items followed by a Varimax rotation yielded two dimensions explaining together 54.1% of the total variance. The first of these dimensions (35.8%) had high loadings for items 1, 3, 5 and 6 and thus represented a dimension of Confidence-Hope ($\alpha = .75$), whereas the second one (18.3) had high loadings for items 2, 4; 7 and 8, and was thus interpreted as a dimension of Fear-Despair ($\alpha = .62$).

EMOTIONS AND EXPRESSION

Emotions associated to past violence and NCTR activities. Participants rated their emotional reactions when thinking about the past events and the commissions’ activities: “To what extent do you feel the following emotions about the collective violence period and NCTR?” They were then proposed a list including three positive emotions (Hope, Happiness and Pride) and four negative emotions (Sadness, Guilt, Anger, Fear and Shame). Response scales anchored as 1= “not at all” and 7= “a great deal” were used. Reliabilities were satisfactory for both positive ($\alpha = .83$) and negative emotions ($\alpha = .79$).

Social sharing of emotions associated to past violences and NCTR/NCPIT activities. Six questions adapted from studies on the social sharing of emotions (Rimé, 2005) enquired about the extent to which respondents to talk about past events and the commissions’ activities. “Have you ever spoken with people around you” (1) “about NCTR since the publication of its report?”; (2) “about past violence since the publication of the NCTR report?; (3) “about the NCTR report in the last month?”; (4) “about NCPIT since the publication of its report?”; (5) about past violence since the publication of the NCPIT report?; (6) about the NCPIT report in the last month?; (7) “Have you felt the need to speak about past violence?”

The response scales ranged from 1= “not at all” to 4= “a great deal”. Reliability was satisfactory ($\alpha = .85$).

VALUES

Finally, items belonging to Universalism values of Schwartz's Portrait Value Questionnaire 21 (Davidoff, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008) asked respondents how far they felt similar or dissimilar to the following characters descriptions “He/she thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He/she wants justice for everybody, even for people he/she doesn't know” and “It is important to him/her to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he/she disagrees with them, he/she still wants to understand them”. Universalistic values are Transcendence values, overcoming self-promotion and connecting people to others and to community in general (Davidoff, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008). Responses scale ranged from 1= very similar to 6= very dissimilar. Reliability was satisfactory for the two items scale measuring Universalism ($\alpha = .64$).

RESULTS

Concerning exposure to violence, 24% of the sample ($n = 304$) consider themselves as direct victims of human rights violations perpetrated in Chile from 1973 to 1989; 33.4% ($n = 424$) report having victims among their family or close friends (indirect victims); and 42.6% ($n = 541$) had not been affected by political violence. Among the direct victims, the main violence actions perpetrated against them by agents of the state were torture (24%), execution or disappearance of a direct family member (17.1%), political imprisonment (6.8%), and exile (6.8%). The remaining percentage (46.6%), report other violent acts by the state or its agents (job dismissal for political reasons and violent assault at home).

Regarding knowledge of the work done by commissions, 42.6% ($n = 625$) report knowing about the NCTR's work and 38.9% ($n = 497$) about the NCPIT's work. Knowledge about the commissions' work is associated with closeness to violence events, direct victims reporting greater knowledge of the NCTR and NCPIT work than indirect victims and those unaffected ($F_{(2, 1263)} = 193.76$; $p = .000$; $f = .27$).

With respect to goals or functions of NCTR, 50% of participants agree with the statement that TC's helps to know the truth, 37% agrees with the idea that the Commission achieves his goal of prevention and his goal of supports justice and 33% agrees that the Commission helps to the construction of an inclusive narrative.

As regards exposure to violence, statistically significant differences ($F_{(2, 1239)} = 5.80.60$; $p = .02$; $\eta = .07$) were found in a perception of TC's goal of creation of an inclusive narrative among the three groups, direct victims ($M = 2.26$) being those who agrees more with the success of this goal, followed by indirect victims ($M = 2.24$) and those unaffected by the violent events ($M = 2.15$). Post hoc analyses indicate that the former two groups form a homogeneous subset.

Attitude towards TC's goal of creating an inclusive narrative was dichotomized into a negative evaluation (scores 1 and 2) and a positive evaluation (scores 3 and 4). Analysis of

variance or ANOVAs, using exposure to violence and attitude toward the commission's goal as independent variables, were conducted to explore the interactions between exposure and the performance of the commissions. No interaction effects were found between exposure to violence and attitude toward commissions' goal of creation of an inclusive narrative, with regard to dependent variables.

Participants supporting the NCTR's goal of creating an inclusive narrative report higher social sharing than participants disagreeing ($M=3.09$ versus $M=2.94$) and indicate a greater number of positive emotions ($M=2.84$ versus $M=2.08$) and negative ($M=3.29$ versus $M=2.91$) ones referring mainly to sadness, anger, shame, hope, and pride

In addition, those who positively evaluate the work of the NCTR in respect to the creation of an inclusive narrative are more likely ($M = 2.90$) to accept the possibility that victims forgive those who did harm to them ($t_{(1206)} = -3.38$; $p < .005$; $d = .24$) than those who disagree with the work of the commissions ($M = 2.44$). They also agree more with the statement of social remembering ("When it comes to this nation's past, we must learn from the mistakes that were made in order to avoid making the same mistake again") that people that disagree that the TC's achieves his goal of construction of an inclusive memory ($M=3.44$ versus $M=3.21$), but not significant differences were found for a "forgetting attitude towards past" ("It's better not to open old wounds by talking about what happened in the past"). Overall participants disagree with social or intergroup forgiveness.

People who positively evaluate the NCTR's goal of creating an inclusive narrative perceive more positive emotional climate measured by CD24 positive items than people that disagree ($M=3.47$ versus $M=3.15$). For instance, by respect to CEPN and CD 24 specific positive items, people agreeing with NCTR's goal of creating an inclusive narrative stress more that political, ethnic and religious groups feel intergroup trust ($M=2.96$) than people disagreeing ($M=2.65$, $t=2.19$, $p<.04$). However, no differences were found for CEPN and CD24 negative emotional climate indexes, nor to Universalistic values.

A multiple regression analysis was carried out to examine specific associations. Positive emotional climate CEPN and CD24 positive items standardized scores provided a global index of socioemotional climate and reconciliation. This climate index was regressed on exposure to violence, the four functions of TC's (know the truth, helps justice, prevention of future violence and creation of an inclusive narrative about the past), positive and negative emotions and social sharing. Positive socioemotional climate correlates positively with TC's evaluation of preventive, support justice, helps to know the truth and creation of an inclusive narrative, $r_{(1206)} = .31$, $r_{(1206)} = .26$, $r_{(1206)} = .26$, and $r_{(1206)} = .16$ respectively, and with positive emotions related to TC's facts and activities, $r_{(1206)} = .15$, and negatively with exposure to violence (3=direct victim and 1=non affected), with social sharing about past collective violence and TC, $r = -.11$, and with negative emotions, $r = -.13$, all $p < .01$. The multiple regression analysis was significant, explaining 18% of variance ($F_{(8, 1149)} = 31.06$; $p < .001$). Standardized beta coefficients show a significant effect of positive evaluation of TC's preventive, support to justice and helps to know the truth functions ($B = .22$, $B = .18$ and $B = .09$ respectively; $p < .001$), low exposure to violence ($B = -.13$; $p < .001$), low negative emotions ($B = -.14$; $p < .001$) and high positive emotions ($B = .08$; $p < .001$) with respect to TC's activities and

past violence. However, social sharing and the function or goal of creating an integrative narrative were not related to positive emotional climate.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that the effects of collective violence in Chile have not been overcome, and there is still a long and difficult road ahead if reconciliation is to be achieved. There is a general attitude of agreement with the work of the NCTR and NCPIT, which co-exists with a critical view of social forgiveness. This positive judgment by the population of the commissions' work is coherent with the findings of previous surveys, and even indicates a historical trend toward a more positive appraisal of TRCs. Results confirm that three-quarters of the Chilean population are in favor of TRCs, particularly indirect victims, while the unaffected and direct victims are slightly more critical (Cardenas *et al.*, 2012). This positive evaluation of the commissions' work is supported by the belief that they fulfilled their functions related to the creation of an inclusive historical narrative, and a positive evaluation of this commission's goal was associated with better perception of social and emotional climate. Direct and indirect victims share more the perception that the TC's helps to elaborate a positive collective memory. However, only a third of the sample shares the idea that the TC was successful to create an integrative narrative. Also showing the limitations of reconciliation, only 21% believe that forgiveness can be achieved, 32% perceives higher intergroup (% agreeing with 4-7 scores) and 49% perceives institutional trust (% agreeing 3-5 scores). Finally, negative collective emotions were higher than positives.

People with a positive attitude toward NCTR's goal of creation of an integrative narrative report higher positive and negative emotions, such as sadness, shame, hope, and pride. Results confirm that satisfactory institutional activity to repair the past acts as an expiation ritual, reactivating a negative moral emotion such as shame, and a positive moral emotion, such as pride, along with negative emotions such as sadness and positive ones such as hope (Páez, 2010).

On the whole, the results suggest that both negative and positive emotions are involved, since anger, sadness and shame mobilize people for reparation and re-empowerment, while pride and hope in relation to the activities of TCs allow people to look to the future with optimism. As far as inter-group forgiveness are concerned, confirming the impact of the NCTR on reconciliation, the results show that a positive evaluation of the commissions' goal of creating an inclusive narrative was associated with relative higher acceptance of social forgiveness. However it is important to remark that neither victims (either direct or indirect) nor the general population believe that forgiveness can be achieved.

People who agree with the commissions' goal of creating an inclusive narrative also believe that apologies are more sincere and effective for increasing inter-group empathy and trust. This perception of apologies correlates (data not shown) with the perception of a more positive social climate, confirming that such processes are associated with inter-group reconciliation (Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008).

Results also confirms that agreement with TRC construction of a common integrative narrative of past collective violence was not only related to forgiveness but also to a positive attitudes towards learning from the past, to high level of inter-group trust, perceived solidarity and confidence in institutions (Nadler, Malloy & Ficher, 2008; Bar-Tal, 2011). However, negative collective emotions were not related to agreement with the TC's goal of creating an inclusive narrative, suggesting that transitional rituals are able to enhance positive collective emotions, but negatives are more related to negative events and collective trauma, than to reparatory initiatives – similar to the fact that positive affect is mainly related to social support, while negative affect is mainly related to negative events, but not to social support (Watson, 2000). Finally agreement with the creation of an integrative collective narrative was unrelated to an attitude favorable to forget the past, and was not associated to the agreement with Universalism values – or high agreement with tolerance of differences and justice for everybody, the subjective value facet of reconciliation (Gibson, 2004). These results show the limitations of an inclusive narrative to reinforce a democratic subjective culture and to help to overcome the attitude towards repress the past.

Social sharing was also related to a positive attitude towards TC's goal of creating an inclusive narrative, suggesting that macro narrative fuels and support interpersonal communication about the past. Moreover, social sharing also correlates with positive emotions, positive evaluation apologies, as well as with egalitarian, tolerant and universal justice beliefs (data not shown). On the other hand, social sharing play a more ambivalent role, because also reinforces negative emotions and climate, eroding positive emotional climate. This result was similar to a previous study with a small Chilean sample (Páez et al, 1997), suggesting than sharing when focused on trauma fuel negative emotions, while at the same time helps to find benefits.

This study shows that TRCs act as a social tool for increasing globally intergroup reconciliation. Moreover, social sharing related to past collective violence and TC activities was also related to positive emotions with respect to political or religious ideological beliefs (data not shown). These results confirm the role of social sharing (Rimé *et al.*, 1998; 2011) and positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2009) in the construction of social well-being. Results suggest that interpersonal communication or social sharing and positive emotions complement the positive influence of transitional justice activities and act as “micro-social rituals” of construction of meaning (Rimé *et al.*, 2011).

In spite of that, neither social sharing nor agreement with the creation of an inclusive narrative or collective memory shows a significant multivariate coefficient. Results suggest that emotional reactions and the achievement of justice, truth and future-oriented goal of prevention are more relevant for reconciliation.

Our results show the positive appraisal of commission work has acted as a symbolic reconstruction ritual, because the positive evaluation of TC's functions are relevant variables on predicting evaluations of the country's social climate. This means that the commissions' work to discover the truth, to see justice done, and to guarantee that such violent events will not happen again reinforce solidarity and perceived positive emotions – even controlling for exposure to violence, social sharing and negative and positive emotional reactions.

Past-oriented task of creation of an inclusive narrative or integrative collective memory was less relevant than the previous ones.

Thus, the Chilean population believes that learning from the past can prevent violence, and the commissions have clarified this past, helping to bring out the truth, and fostered a climate of the pursuit of justice by punishing the guilty. The population agrees on the need to compensate victims and their family members for the harm done. Those who evaluate commission work in this way are the people who foresee a more optimistic future and give better appraisals of the country's social climate; they are also those who consider victims' forgiveness toward the perpetrators of violence as more possible.

Given the cross-sectional nature of this study, attributions of causality are limited; moreover, the conclusions are based only on self-reports. Even so, the large sample of citizens – which can be considered to represent the majority of the Chilean population – and the long list of items based on a previous successful survey (Gibson, 2004) allow us to be confident about our conclusions.

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